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ABSTRACT

Designed as a looseleaf resource, a supplement to established teaching plans, and an aid to meeting individual needs, this compilation of writing exercises represents the responses of 157 teachers from 87 two-year colleges to the request, "Describe a successful writing task -- what it is, how you teach it, and why." The compilation includes tasks aimed at developing specific writing skills and combinations of skills, along with ideas on implementing the writing process as a whole. Following introductory comments, exercises are presented in the following categories: (1) getting started; (2) brainstorming; (3) choosing a topic; (4) organizing; (5) the paragraph; (6) introductions and conclusions; (7) the thesis statement and topic sentence; (8) transitions; (9) being specific; (10) theme writing, including personal experience, process, description, narration, comparison/contrast, definition, classification, argument and persuasion, logical analysis, and inferential assignments; (11) letter writing; (12) writing about poetry; (13) writing about the short story; (14) writing for publication; (15) writing an interview; (16) writing the survey and summary; (17) writing essay exams; (18) writing the research paper; (19) combination writing assignments; (20) revising; (21) reading and writing; (22) mechanics, including commas, pronouns, fragments, and modifiers; (23) usage; (24) sentence combining; (25) unity and conciseness; (26) ambiguity; (27) point of view; (28) style; (29) small group approach; (30) peer help; and (31) the whole method. A list of colleges represented and an index of contributors conclude the workbook. (LAL)

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WHAT'S HAPPENING IN FRESHMAN COMPOSITION IN THE CALIFORNIA TWO-YEAR COLLEGE: A COLLECTION OF WRITING TASKS

"A WORKING BOOK"

Compiled by

Helena Hale

Santa Barbara City College

A Sabbatical Leave Project

1979-80

JC 860 466

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INTRODUCTION

This section of my sabbatical project - What's Happening in Freshman Composition in the California Two-Year College: A Collection of Writing Tasks - began as an eighteen-page fill-in questionnaire designed to find the great answer. After a trial run I found myself on a collision course with the deadly spectre of dehumanization which was going to destroy my goal of finding out how thinking human beings were helping other thinking human beings with their struggle to articulate. How were students being taught to think clearly and communicate the results in acceptable written form? No number of tabulated answers, punched out and disgorged by a computer, could produce the desired information.

After revisions and indecisions I found the answer last summer while attending Roger Garrison's Institute on How to Teach Writing - Better, a seminar for two-year college teachers. Some fellow-members agreed to answer my new shortened questionnaire that asked for longer replies. During this tiresome procedure a muddled participant suggested condensing all the material into one question: "Describe a successful writing task - what it is, how you teach it, and why." The project took off within minutes. Institute members wrote their answers with enthusiasm. Written requests mailed to teachers all over California brought three times the expected number of responses. An extra bonus is a number of tasks from out-of-state teachers at the Institute where the project had its real start.

This collection is called a Working Book rather than a Workbook as originally intended because it contains work-in-progress that functions spontaneously as a loose-leaf resource, as a supplement to established teaching plans, and as an aid to individual needs. It includes tasks aimed to develop specific skills, combinations of skills, and also includes ideas on implementing the writing process as a whole.

For helpful reference I have categorized each contribution. Please accept/forgive unintentional inaccuracies and manipulation of property. Since each writing task is an organic whole, to impose limitations is regrettable but necessary.

We can help each other to keep on innovating by recognizing the value of offering our students stimulating, imaginative, and original materials - new and interesting approaches to a challenging discipline. "Teaching becomes a way of eliciting the most desirable behavior from each individual as a writer."[1]

The uniqueness of this collection lies in the fact that these tasks, currently in practice, are a realistic cross-section of freshman composition classes in action, the next best thing to "being there."

One hundred and fifty-seven teachers from eighty-seven two-year colleges have contributed a total of one hundred and eighty-seven writing tasks. (Lucky sevens!) This enthusiastic response has been overwhelming.

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[1]William F. Irmscher, Teaching Expository Writing (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979), p. 30.

Best of all - countless students will benefit from such generous sharing of expertise. There's something for everyone.

> If you can help each of your students find his own spiral, his own rhythm of learning the difficult task of writing, then you are teaching well, and he will be learning efficiently. His learning is the only reason for your teaching.[2]

For all these fine efforts - A GREAT BIG THANK YOU!

Helena Currie
Santa Barbara City College

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[2]Roger H. Garrison, "One-to-One: Tutorial Instruction in Freshman Composition," from "Implementing Innovative Instruction," New Directions for Community Colleges, Vol. II, No. 1 (Spring, 1974), p. 83.

GETTING STARTED

Comment: The purpose of this assignment (which I've used in English 50, the non-transfer composition class) is to get students started writing and to get them used to the process at the beginning of the semester. I intend it to be a non-threatening kind of exercise.

Writing Assignment: Sense Record

You will receive full credit for simply doing this exercise; it will not be evaluated for quality by me. You will be the best judge of whether it worked or not.

Purpose of assignment: to get the electricity flowing from brain to hand.

Assignment:

1. Choose a comfortable and preferably relaxing but interesting place where you can sit uninterrupted for 45 minutes.

2. Sit there for 45 minutes with a supply of paper and several ballpoint pens.

   While sitting there, try to keep writing continuously. If you can't think of anything to write, write, "I can't think of anything to write" until you do think of something to write--besides that. Or write "oh darnit" until you think of something better. (I cleaned up that example.) Keep the old hand moving.

3. Here's what I want you to attempt: Consider yourself a sensory recording machine, somewhat like the robot spaceships we send to other planets, except far more complicated and sophisticated. You not only take in sensory details; you also evaluate, compare, make connections, recall, ponder, and imagine. Your hand is your recording mechanism. Your eyes, ears, nose, and skin are your main sensors; your brain the onboard computer.

   Record your surroundings, as you perceive them, referring to as many senses as possible. Don't just concentrate on sight. Listen. Smell. Reach out and touch. Consider your own body part of the world you are sensing. Be aware of its inner movements, feelings, and sometimes audible sounds.

   Don't move around, if possible. I don't want you to waste time recording your track. If unavoidably interrupted, note the time and pick up where you left off after the interruption.

4. Use the present tense. You are recording your senses as you sense them, so say, "I see... It is.... I hear...." etc.

5. Do not worry at all about making logical sense, about grammar, about complete sentences, about spelling, about any of these things which would concern you if this were to be considered a final draft of an essay.

6. Try not to censor your thoughts as you record them. What you are writing could be described as "stream of consciousness" writing, with an emphasis on sensory details. Say anything that pops into your head.

7. Flow with your thoughts. Though I want you to begin with a sensory (sensual, perhaps) description of the concrete world of your surroundings, if your thoughts turn inward to memories, dreams, worries, reasons, etc., flow with it. Remember you can censor this writing afterwards, so don't censor it as it happens.

8. Reread your sense record after the 45 minutes is up (but not before) and do not make any editorial changes. If, however, you would feel uncomfortable about my reading some of your uncensored thoughts, delete (by crossing it off with a dark felt tip marker, for instance) any section you wish. Remember, you can delete, but you cannot change.

B. Dilworth
Golden West College

- -

I teach journalism and having worked as a journalist for over a decade there is one question that always produces a gut level response.

It is a very simple question but seems to produce a verbalness. That is, it generates often eloquent answers from people who have not had a history in class of literary output.

The assignment is one I've used in composition classes. It's my favorite. It is:

"In 500 words or less, tell me about your father."

Brian Wiersema
Mira Costa College

- -

Nothing works consistently. After twenty five years at Chaffey and other years of composition experience at Pomona College, Scripps College, University of Louisville and the English school system I find that freshmen students can and will write about themselves.

The best device I have found is to ask them to assume that they will die before the day is over and have them write their own obituaries or the oration to be delivered at their funerals. It works.

A variation on the same theme is also an ice breaker during the early days with a new class. Ask them to interview and be interviewed by one other student in the group and write a profile on that student.

Michael Malone
Chaffey College

- -

We read the Norton Critical Edition of Alice in Wonderland. I showed slides of Victorian England, Victoria, child labor, drug use and medicine, etc. I had pages from an Alice in Wonderland coloring book displayed on the walls of the classroom. I then asked students for a review of paragraph writing to write on--a satirical portrait that adds to the humor of Alice. After receiving these long, detailed paragraphs, I commented on them and returned them. I suggested the topic as possible for the next full-length paper. Good papers came in, on topics such as the Royal Figures of Alice in Wonderland: the women of Alice in Wonderland; Alice as a proper Victorian girl, etc.

Bernice O. Zelduth
Foothill College

- -

This assignment is not novel but it is fun because of the nature of the story and drama.

Source: Teaching of Literature to Adolescents.
Short stories by Stephen Dunning, Scott, Foresman and Company, 1968.

Activity: Read orally to students "Appointment with Love" by G. I.Kishor up to the passage: "The woman's face broadened in a tolerant smile" which is the beginning sentence of the final paragraph.

Instructions: Ask students to complete the story in the most creative way during a twenty minute in-class writing. Later ask students to read aloud their conclusion. This will be fun, much laughter. Finally the instructor reads the author's ending. Great opportunity for variety of writing expeience.

The selection is a power house because of the romance and suspence and brevity.

Elizabeth Balakian
Fresno City College

- -

Write a letter to your critics, those "demons" who stop your writing before you start. Describe them in as much detail as you can. If they are identified with specific people (e.g., father or stern teacher) say so. Write dialogue concerning what they say to you and back to them. Arrive at a pact with them so that they will allow you to write. For example, they might as well let you write something so that they can come in later, when they will be useful to you, and critique your work. If they stop you from the start, they will have nothing to work on!

Getting started in writing is often difficult for most of us. This task

enables students to identify the causes for some of their blocks, to verbalize them, and to discuss them with the rest of the class. Most important it helps them to begin to overcome these silence-makers. The assignment also gives practice in identifying and analyzing a problem, writing dialogue and description, and creating a solution and presenting it.

Diane LeBow
Canada College

- -

My favorite exercise is useful for the second or even the first class meeting; it uses an hour or more of a meeting which is often wasted because new students are coming after the initial enrollment and the enrolled students don't have the books. All you need are six or eight "filler" articles from the local paper; human interest, celebrities, politics, current affairs are all workable as long as they are short blurbs. After a brief discussion of the composing process (students usually admit to a range of methods from formal outlines to composing at the typewriter), you divide the students into groups of four or five and give each group an article to work up. The groups must plan an approach for writing a paper using the article as a springboard for a thesis. The article should yield a topic from which they can generate a thesis, an approach and a possible tone for the paper. For example, an article on Coca-Cola's expanded market into Red China prompted a group to consider the merits of corporate structure in the U.S. economy. They suggested doing research into the influence of corporations on politics. Their approach and tone were both formal and serious.

Karen McGuire
Pasadena City College

- -

On the first day of class I have had students do two writings without their knowing at first that there will be two. It goes this way: First I ask them in a very conventional way to take ten minutes to tell me in writing why they are taking the class and what they hope to gain from it. I tell them that it won't be graded, that it's just a sample to help me see what their writing is like.

In less than ten minutes, I abruptly ask them to stop and listen to me carefully. I tell them they are going to do another writing, and that there are very different ground rules (or a greater lack of them). I tell them that I want them to get ready to say whatever they'd like to say about their past English classes without any fear of criticism. In fact, I promise that no one will have to turn this one in if they don't want to. I tell them they must concentrate on being free to express themselves, and on having to satisfy no one but themselves. I also tell them to forget about grammar, spelling, and mechanics. I tell them to try to write nonstop as in free writing. I re-emphasize that they are free to speak their mind and their feelings and to use any language they choose.

OK. I say "go" and after about 8-10 minutes I again tell them to stop. Then I ask them to read what they've just written and then to turn the paper over and read what they first wrote. I ask them if they notice any difference. Slowly, a discussion develops and several people notice that the first writing is more conventional, more cautious, more routine, more dull; and that the second has more zip and honesty. BUT not all will say this. Several things happen here: a few students are already "free" and write quite loosly and honestly on #1, so their #2 pieces are not much different; a few students do worse on #2, because free writing completely unhinges them; some students simply write two #1's. They don't make the shift. They resist it. They stay tight and cautious. But the majority do write well, typical, #1's and lively and open #2's. All of the common cliches are produced.

I usually can get most students to hand both pieces in, and I get their permission to read some aloud without naming the writers. There is inevitably some fun in this. They hear the notion of voice and tone without knowing that's what you call it. They also start to see that I want honest writing from them. It's an organic demonstration; they, rather than some text, provide the material.

Dick Lundquist
Cabrillo College

- -

I have developed a good way to give comp students immediate, or almost immediate, feedback on their writing at the very beginning of a course. I read aloud to them an anecdote from a book (I've used the one on pp. 24-25 of T. Roszak's book Where the Wasteland Ends, which is about a visit to Old Faithful in Yellowstone Park and is a statement about our alienation from nature). I tell the students to listen carefully and, when I am done, to write in one sentence on a half sheet of paper the "meaning" implicity within the anecdote. I ask that the sentence be not less than twelve words in length and no longer than, say, twenty-five. I ask that the students not write their names on their papers.

Then, before the next class period, I take the sentences and type them up on a ditto master, numbering them. I type them exactly "as is," with all spelling, punctuation, or grammatical mistakes. In class I then give each student a copy, asking them all to look through the list and find their own sentences. Then I "farm out" the sentences for comment to individual students. I ask them merely to tell me if there are any outright errors in the sentence. If they miss errors, I then point them out. If a sentence is fully correct, we put "C" next to it. If it has one or more errors, then it is an incorrect sentence. We do not try to evaluate content, though a remark or two about that can be made as well. Mere awkwardness of phrasing is noted but is not called an outright error.

Students like this exercise because it gives them immediate feedback, it is their own writing and that of their classmates, and it is completely anonymous. Not even the instructor knows who wrote what. While getting acquainted with a new class, the teacher can also, in a kind of "shotgun" approach, before he gets systematic, get across a lot of fundamental points about writing.

There are several benefits: 1) students are sobered to see that out of 30 of them only about 7 or 8 have written a completely correct sentence; 2) they begin learning something from their own writing right away; 3) they enjoy doing this.

Richard F. Norlin
Palomar College

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Some Prewriting Suggestions
(Use as loosener-up, early in semester)

(First Line/Second Line)

1. Descending the slippery rocks, I found the cave again. Entering, there suddenly appeared a strange light, and I saw _____.
2. "Nobody understands me. Nobody! Why can't you all just go away and leave me alone."
3. The last man on earth sat in his lonely room. Suddenly, there was a knocking at the door.
4. "You listen to me - you're not going anywhere. You think you can just use this house like a hotel and come and go as you please. Well, tonight you're staying home with your family, and that's that. I don't want to hear another word about it.

(First Line/Last Line)

5. John walked into the small, cheaply-furnished room./ One by one the distant lights disappeared into the still blackness of the night.
6. Wonderful or supernatural events are not so uncommon; rather they are irregular in their incidence./ I decided to walk home along the beach and maybe laugh some more, loud enough for the sound to break on the other side of the world.
7. The day broke gray and dull. The clouds hung heavily and there was a rawness in the air that suggested snow./ He smiled and took her hand and pressed it. They got up and walked out of the _____. The sun was shining.
8. Peering through the grimy window of the Rainbow's End Cafe, Ellen watched the raucous line of motorcycles roar into the nearly empty parking lot./ "Well, so ends another boring day." said Ellen, smiling sardonically as she emphasized the word "boring."
9. We walked along the deserted beach on a brilliant, sun drenched morning./ Neither time nor distance can erase the _____ of that day.

(Opening Lines)

10. Fourth down and inches to go.
11. Starting all over again was the hardest thing he'd ever had to do in his life.
12. Chuck hated to admit it, but what he really felt at the funeral, more than anything else, was boredom.

13. A ray of sunlight glowed through the Gothic window pane and lit up a small corner of the blue and magenta rug.
14. Betsy no longer had a choice--tonight she would have to tell the truth, no matter what happened, no matter how much it hurt.
15. Across the street, a broken neon sign flashed on and off, advertising "Cha lie's Ba and Grill."
16. Anne sat alone for nearly five hours, starring at the silent phone.

Dick Dodge
Santa Monica College

- -

Written Class Assignment

Keeping to the time frame of this period of English 1, write a short composition on one (1) of the following topics. Write as well as you can using good English and correct writing procedures. See the Board for instructions on indorsement of the papers. Please return the topic sheets to the instructor, along with your papers, at the end of the class.

1. How will the customs, views, and daily concerns of our day look to the person living in the year 2000? Write a theme from the point of view of the observer in the year 2000 and discuss the 'progress' of the present era.

2. Plans for the Future? (This topic would refer to your plans as a person.)

3. "I came into this world, not chiefly to make this a good place to live in, but to live in it, be it good or bad." Discuss this utterance by Henry D. Thoreau (1817-1862), American poet, naturalist, and essayist.

4. Discuss the theory that marriage is an outdated situation.

5. Discuss the forms of entertainment that you like best.

6. Describe the characteristics of today's teen-agers.

7. Explain your reasons for deciding to attend Santa Barbara City College, and relate your decision to your plans for the future.

8. Argue pro or con on the statement: "Mechanical gadgets clutter up modern life."

9. Write a theme describing what the 'conforming' student wears today.

10. Gore Vidal, controversial author and political TV personality, has proposed the formation of a third political party in the United States--the Earth Party, whose aim is to save our country from environmental doom. Give your views on Vidal's proposal, commenting specifically on qualifications necessary for environment-dedicate series.

11. If you have acquired a specialized knowledge in a particular field, explain how you became interested in acquiring this knowledge, how you have developed it, and what you expect to do with this expertise.

12. "Arming to preserve peace cannot help but produce war." Discuss and evaluate this statement.

13. Using this argument as a mode or means of exposition, discuss a historical character (or a current public figure) who you believe is overrated.

14. Historians may regard the year 1973 as a turning point in world history. Discuss the reasons why.

NOTE: TURN IN THE TOPIC SHEETS SEPARATELY TO THE INSTRUCTOR AS YOU LEAVE CLASS!

Guy H. Peterson
Santa Barbara City College

- -

The students are asked to "free write" for ten minutes. Then they are asked to circle the two or three ideas (may be even sentences) in the exercise in which they "lost" themselves, that is forgot what they were writing in the first place.

Next they take these two or three notions and write clear sentences from the basic idea, followed by a paragraph or two.

I find the students seem to respond with good paragraphs almost every time. I suspect it's because they write something they cared about--almost in spite of themselves.

Burl Hogins
Mesa College

- -

BRAINSTORMING

Terms:
The term brainstorming is applied to group sessions.
The term deferred judgment is applied to "individual brainstorming."

We learn to be critical, to make judgments from the time we are little. We learn a stove is hot; we learn if we say certain words, we get spanked; we learn that if we pipe up with an idea, somebody may shoot it down. Because it is necessary for survival, we learn to curb impulses, modify ideas, and reject

thoughts. We also learn how to kill our creativity.

Certain studies have shown that creative thought and critical thought may be two different processes and to have both operating at the same time may impede the progress of an idea. Brainstorming is an experiment in separating these two processes.

Most of us have been given a single sheet of beautifully clean, white paper and told to write on it. Well, better not be messy! No time to play with ideas. Pick a safe idea. Watch every word, every sentence. We get so busy with the critical, that the rich idea may get lost. Most of us have been told, "to begin, make an outline," so we grab the first idea that comes along (it may not be the best), and we proceed to make an outline.

We don't drive cars with the brake and the gas pedal in use--both at the same time. Try the brainstorming. For some it proves to be a very effective technique.

Assignment: Follow this process five minutes a day for five days. Pick something for a "springboard": a little dog, a blue sky, the clock on the wall. Then for five minutes, just write. Let the ideas lead anywhere they will. Keep the pen moving. Don't be critical. Don't worry about mechanics, spelling, etc. Step on the gas and let the ideas flow. Sometimes nothing will come. Other times the same idea may keep repeating itself. Just keep writing. You will find that it becomes easier as you go along. After the assignment is over, continue doing this on your own. It's only five minutes, make it longer if you wish. It seems to help people begin to feel comfortable with writing and to let the richness of their own experience begin to flow down onto paper.

ASSIGNMENT TO BE HANDED IN. When you have completed five of the assigned brainstorms, hand me a statement that you have done so. Include a brief evaluation of your own experience. Do not hand in the "brainstorms." The assignment will be recorded done ( ) or not done (F).

Principles of Brainstorming and Deferred Judgment

1. Brainstorming and deferred judgment both involve free association, free wheeling--no brakes. Play with ideas. Let one idea suggest another. If an idea is rejected, the idea it may have suggested is lost. Let ideas piggy-back on to one another. "I can't know what I mean until I see what I've said," has a lot of truth to it. Get the ideas down where you can see them. The "twilight zone" is a great place for ideas to come into being: just before sleep, the critical faculty begins to release its tight guard. Keep a notebook beside the bed and jot down that hazy day-dream.

2. CRITICISM IS RULED OUT. Wild, kooky ideas are encouraged. It's a lot easier to tame ideas down afterwards than it is to build them up. Criticism is the wet blanket, so send "de judge" to lunch. There are no bad ideas or good ieas, just ideas.

3. Quantity is important. The more, the better. The longer the time spent, the better; the more often the ideas are allowed to flow, the easier it is for them to flow.

4. Combination and improvement are involved. In group brainstorming, people bring together different perceptions, different experiences. The free sharing sparks ideas. One person may throw out an idea that someone else can pick up and build on. In "individual brainstorming" the richer one's experience becomes, the more new elements added to the mind's storehouse, the greater is the possiblity of new combinations. Add one new piece of glass to a kaleido scope and consider the myriad of new patterns now possible.

There is a time later for criticism. There is a time to look over the ideas and exercise judgment, choosing those ideas that will be effective for one's purpose. There is a time to organize, order, edit, and polish. Most good writers do some rewriting. But for the brainstorming exercise, get your foot off the brake.

The Writing Process.

1. Feed the brain. Really look at things and say the colors to yourself. Touch things and think of words that describe texture. Listen to music, to someone's voice, to the dentist's drill and try to find the words that convey the sensation. Get the material gathered that will become a source for the solution.

2. Incubation. After you have some ideas, relax. Let your subconscious do some work for you. (Of course, you will have noted the ideas down somewhere--possibly in a brainstorming session--so that they are not lost forever.)

3. Illumination. Sometimes it hits. The pieces fall together of themselves and the light literally dawns: the pupils actually expand at the moment of problem solution.

4. Presentation. The 99% perspiration that goes with the 1% inspiration comes in trying to convey clearly to another person the idea, the experience, that is yours.

NOTE

Essay writing need not be dull. It can be exciting. The richest source of creative material is first hand experience. Someone else's experience, material from books, movies, etc., is basically second-hand material. Material that belongs to one's own self is truly experienced; all the senses are involved and some of the best writing comes out of this area. Furthermore, second-hand experience has a ready-made order. First hand experience demands the writer apply order.

Bonnie Robinson
Golden West College

- -

CHOOSING A TOPIC

For the first assigned 500 word composition in Freshman English, I spend five days carefully outlining instructions which I write out and distribute. I follow the instructions with three student examples of papers that are models of that assignment.

Outside of class, the students choose a topic, limit the topic, find information on their topic and order that information for their first 500 word paper. In class, they talk about their limited topic.

Each student brings to class 15 copies of his composition. Each paragraph (5 paragraphs) has the topic sentence underlined and the transitional words circled. In addition, they number the paragraphs: I-Introduction; II, III, IV, -Body; V-Conclusion.

As a class, we read, word by word, every student paper written. We read four or five papers a day, so it takes a week to read and analyze all the papers. This process of going through each student's paper requires that the class make suggestions about style (better vocabulary, word choice, or ways of expressing ideas); correct the mechanics, notice the structure and make comments on the organization (development, unity, continuity, etc.) and evaluate the content (ideas, originality, quality of information, etc.)

After experiencing 25 students papers, the class has learned a vocabulary for evaluating academic compositions enabling students to evaluate their own papers for the rest of the course. Each paper gets a grade for style, mechanics, organization, and content. And the student learns what those words mean. Although the whole process takes two weeks, I learned that the only way to teach writing is to correct papers word for word with the students themselves. Any teacher who takes home a stack of papers, corrects them alone, then hands them back is wasting time. Papers must be gone over with students so that they can learn to evaluate writing using vocabulary that we can agree describes that writing.

Jacquelyn B. Carr
Foothill College

- -

A writing project for (remedial) composition students in Community College: "A Portrait of a Person"--someone you know well.

To combine descriptive writing with narrative, expository and "oral-history," I ask students at the beginning of the semester to choose a person close to them. The first task is to write one long paragraph on the appearance of the person. It must be very detailed, including facial expressions, gestures, glances, mannerisms, etc. The idea is to observe closely, to "see more," and to use vivid language. Students who formerly produced only two or three

sentences per paragraph, are surprised to learn how much they can write about merely the "looks" of a person.

Second, I assign one paragraph on a prominent trait of the same person. Students who wish to tell about several personality traits may do so, but each one must be developed into a full, convincing paragraph, with lively examples. Objectivity is not required; students are free to express their responses to these traits--disdain, anger, impatience, amusement, admiration, etc. Paragraph unity is stressed.

The third assignment focuses on a skill, hobby, sport, or job. This paragraph may incorporate process analysis (just how a thing is done), narration (how the skill was acquired, despite obstacles, etc.), as well as close observation (of a person engrossed in an activity), and, possibly, comparison-contrast (does someone else, perhaps the writer, perform the task better, faster, less skillfully, etc.?) Detail, clarity and coherence are essential here.

Later in the semester, I ask students to interview their subject. I suggest specific questions, which may, of course, be varied to suit the particular case (age, interests, degree of intimacy, background etc.). The point is to capture the voice of the person interviewed, to quote properly, to edit if necessary, but mainly, to bring to light past experiences of personal and historical value.

At semester's end, transitions, additions, and revisions are made, and the completed project or "portrait" of several pages handed in for re-evaluation. Most students find this project rewarding--for building writing skills and confidence progressively, as well as new bridges to another person.

B. Ruth Weisner
Merrit College

- -

I've tried a number of things (who hasn't?) but in many ways the "discovery paper" has been the most rewarding. (This is also an exercise in critical reading.) The students are told to read a selection and then write a one page "discovery paper" in which they discuss some discovery their reading has uncovered. This can be something about the subject, the structure of the reading, the style--very open-ended. They know in advance that it is to be some observation which they wish to bring to the attention of some person who has also read the selection. I tell them that their discovery papers should enhance/enrich someone else's appreciation of the text. In other words, they are to imagine that they are teaching the selection.

You have to keep this up for three of four readings before some of the students get into the swing of it. I either had the students break up into groups and read the papers together, or I would read a few aloud to the class. They served well to promote a discussion that was not totally teacher-centered and that represented more than top-of-the-head observations by the students.

This semester I am trying something very similar in English 1B (the above was a

remedial composition assignment), with the hopes that these informal papers will become the basis for more formal essays.

Ed Buckley
Santa Rosa Junior College

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Rules for Ten Topics

You have brought ten term paper topics which thoroughly fascinate you to class today. You are about to share them with your peers. In just one more hour, you will be a term paper topic expert, having read and thought about nearly three hundred of them!

1. Read the ten topics handed to you very carefully.
2. Put a star by the topic which you feel would lead to the best and most interesting term paper.
3. Put a check by any other two topics which also interest your or have potential.
4. You must give every paper a star (even if this means putting a star by the topic you think is least possible.) The check marks are optional, but never use more than two per paper.
5. Steal any term paper topic that really appeals to you. (I'll explain later why this is going to be alright).
6. After examining fifty or more topics, start trying to understand why some topics seem to have more potential or are more interesting than others. (Hint: Does the fact that nuclear power has come up thirty times tend to deaden your interest?) Write down a few notes on the criteria you are using to select topics.
7. When your paper comes back around, try to interpret what the marks on it mean. Your peer's interest need not determine your term paper topic, but it might influence your decision.

Cynthia Katona
Ohlone College

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Grammar, style, and organization are among the aspects of writing regularly emphasized in comp. classes, but the area most largely neglected is content. How to teach students to increase the "substantiality" of their writing is decidedly unexplored territory. In an effort to machete through, I organized the following assignment, which has produced what I would deem encouraging results.

> Step A: Produce three topic sentences of a nature highly conducive to penetrating, insightful analysis. Load this sentence with two built-in problems which you as writer will have to ponder long and hard.

Example: Once we fully understand the concept of "giving away the bride," we will see why the son-in-law's relationship with his wife's parents is destined to be such an uneasy one.

Question One: What is involved in the concept of "giving away the bride?"

Question Two: How does the concept of "giving away the bride" complicate the relationship between the groom and the bride's parents?

(This step is subject to instructor approval. By simple umpire decision, those judged superficial in potential for insight are sent back to the drawing board.)

Step B: Once all three topic sentences are approved, select the one you feel most comfortable with and write a long paragraph (at least 200 words) which methodically explores these interlocking problems with methodical, in-depth analysis.

Thomas J. King
American River College

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ORGANIZING

Assigned Title: A description of My Experiences with Assigned Writing
Short Title: Assigned Writing

Study the suggested outline given below. When working out an outline for yourself, use sentences (not topics) that can be transferred to your composition.

Introduction

(Your final introductory paragraph will be about four or five sentences long. The first sentence will attempt to interest the reader in what you have to say. One sentence will point up your assigned topic. The last sentence should effectively assert your purpose and/or central idea.)

I. With disbelief I hear my history professor say, "Your first book report will be due October 11."

II. (Here are three possible statements establishing purpose):

GOOD I want to describe my experiences with writing assignments in college and high school.

BETTER I have experienced difficulty completing assigned writing in college and high school. (The word difficulty offers an attitude around which to unify.)

BEST College and high school writing have sharpened my abilities to analyze instructions, to do research, and to write purposefully. (Now you have signalled an easy, three-part organization for your reader.)

Body

I. Let me describe one kind of assignment that I worked through in . . . . OR Let me describe two assignments . . . .

II. Because I was inexperienced in good research techniques, I wasted lots of time in the library.

III. When I finally received the paper back and looked at the grade, I knew . . . .

Conclusion

I. I'm ready to begin another semester remembering past writing, library work, and instructor evaluation.

II. What I've learned from completing past writing assignments can be put to use.

You'll write a rough draft in class that may or may not have an outline and should be at least two hundred words long. Then you will do a final draft of at least four hundred words. Turn in an outline with your final draft and the evaluation cover sheet that goes to the reader.

Peggy Burkhardt
Los Angeles Harbor College

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My most effective assignment to date (this year) was an assignment on organization. I read the attached excerpt from the L.A. Times; then I asked the students to take the information included and to organize it into an essay on the lot of old people. I allowed them to include information of their own as well. The essay had to be accompanied by an outline. This assignment forces students to organize information.

"Is Anybody Listening?"

Hello! Is there anyone out there who will listen to me?
How can I convince you that I am a prisoner?
For the past five years, I have not seen a park or the ocean or even just a few feet of grass.

I am an 84-year-old woman, and the only crime which I have committed is that I have an illness which is called chronic. I have severe arthritis and about five years ago I broke my hip. While I was recuperating in the hospital, I realized that I would need extra help at home. But there was no one. My son died 35 years ago, my husband, 25 years ago. I have a few nieces and nephews who come by to visit once in a while, but I couldn't ask them to take me in, and the few friends I still have are just getting by, themselves. So I wound up at a convalescent hospital in the middle of Los Angeles.

All kinds of people are thrown together here. I sit and watch, day after day. As I look around this room, I see the pathetic ones (maybe the lucky ones--who knows?) who have lost their minds, and the poor souls who should be out but nobody comes to get them, and the sick ones who are in pain. We are all locked up together.

I have been keeping in touch with the world through the newspaper, my one great luxury. For the last few years I have been reading about the changes in Medicare regulations. All I can see from these improvements is that nurses spend more time writing. For, after all, how do you regulate caring?

Most of the nurse's aides who work here are from other countries. Even those who can speak English don't have much in common with us. So they hurry to get their work done as quickly as possible. There a few caring people who work here, but there are so many of us who are needy for that kind of honest attention.

A doctor comes to see me once a month. He spends approximately three to five seconds with me and then a few more minutes writing in the chart or joking with the nurses. (My own doctor doesn't come to convalescent hospitals, so I had to take this one.) I sometimes wonder about how the nurses' aides feel when they work so hard for so little money and then see that the person who spends so little time is the one who is paid the most.

I notice that most of the physicians who come here don't even pay attention to things like whether their patient's finger-nails are trimmed or whether their body is foul-smelling. Last week when the doctor come to see me, I hadn't had a bath in 10 days because the nurse's aide took too long on her coffee break. She wrote in the chart that she gave me a shower--anyway, who would check or care? I would be labeled a complainer or losing my memory, and that would be worse.

It is now 8 o'clock. Time to be in bed. I live through each night--and it is a long night--with memories of my childhood. I lived on an apple farm in Washington.

I remember how I used to bake, pies and cakes and cookies for friends and neighbors and their children. In the five years I have been here, I have had no choice--no choice of when I want to eat or what I want to eat. It has been so long since I have tasted fruit like mango or cherries.

As I write this, I keep wishing I were exaggerating.
These last five years feel like the last five hundred of my life.
Last year, one of the volunteers here read us a poem. It was by Robert Browning. I think it was called "Rabbi Ben Ezra." It went something like this: "Grow old along with me, the best of life is yet to be." How can I begin to tell you that growing old in America is for me an unbelievably, lonely nightmare?
I am writing this because many of you may live to be old like me, and by then it will be too late. You, too, will be stuck here and wonder why nothing is being done, and you, too, will wonder if there is any justice in life. Right now, I pray every night that I may die in my sleep and get this nightmare of what someone has called life over with, if it means living in this prison day after day.

JoRay McCuen
Glendale Community College

- -

One writing assignment I like is this: I ask the class to read the well-traveled "How to Write an F Paper, Fresh Advice for Freshman English." After discussing the article, I make a writing assignment: write an F paper, a lousy essay. (It can ramble, be disorganized, lack focus, including misspellings, etc., but the sentences must make sense.) I grade them accordingly: an F grade = an actual A, a D = B, etc. The assignment is fun, and if assigned early in the semester, it is a good ice-breaker. Next I tell them I am going to show them how to write an A paper (well, maybe a B). We look at various sample papers from a variety of college and other classes that were good enough to earn an A grade. My purpose here is to point out just one thing: the value of organization. The next writing assignment is to write a paper and make it a good one. I stay away from set organizational plans, but tell them to concentrate on organizing ideas systematically. This often results in a set of pretty-solid, if rough, compositions.

Jack Swanson
Canada College

- -

An interview with an "older" person. I ask my students to find someone who is at least over 60 years of age, preferably someone who is an immigrant. An interview is set up for several hours' duration at home or workplace of the person interviewed. Sometimes questions are submitted in advance. The student outlines his questions before arriving for the interview. I go over the questions with each student individually in class.

There are five parts to the actual essay that result from the interview: (1) The questions; (2) the answers (both of these are in the usual quotes); (3) thoughts of the interviewer while asking/listening; (4) description of the setting/room/office where the interview takes place; (5) thoughts of the student

while asking questions or reflecting on the answers. It is the manipulation of these five parts of the essay that demonstrate the student's ability to handle dialogue, paragraphing, complicated punctuation, etc.

Sometimes I allow the student to use parents, grandparents, even young people when he cannot find an "older" person.

This long essay is read in rough-draft form in class before all the students. A revision is done at home, and the final copy is turned in later.

This particular essay has produced some marvelous stories. One of the nice side-results of this assignment is the student response. So many of them are flabbergasted at how interesting "older" people really are.

I make the assignment near the end of term. I enjoy reading the papers more than any other themes of the semester.

The assignment involved organization. Students had already written classification essays which had been edited and graded. Students were asked to make an outline of their essays. The outlines revealed the fundamental inadequacy of their organization of the material. Even the best students profited, although some were unable to profit as much as those students at the top.

William A. Grant
Cabrillo College

- -

Step 1 - Collect 20-25 pictures. They need not be related, but may come from a family trip, a magazine, your own drawings or any combination. It is probably a good idea to have a variety of action, scenes, and people, but not necessary. Bring them to class tomorrow.

Step 2 - Out of the pictures you have brought, choose 12-18 and develop a travelogue. This is to be given to a defined audience by a defined narrator. Decide on specific subject to be discussed, narrator, and audience and put these on the top of your rough draft.

Step 3 - You will give your travelogue to a group of 5 people in the class who will assume the personality of your defined audience. You may use slides if you wish and simple costuming to assume the defined narrator role.

Maribeth Mohan
Middleton, WI

- -

The student is asked to describe a place that was a favorite of his as a child or perhaps even now as an adult - a park, a room, etc. The student is to emphasize those details that will allow the reader to see the place as he sees it. He may even discuss what he does there.

The student is given the assignment during the last few minutes of a class. I briefly describe my favorite place. The student is to make an outline or organized list of his details before the next class and be prepared to begin writing at the next class.

Sheri Midkiff
Southern Baptist College
Walnut Ridge, AR

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An exercise for teaching completeness and incompleteness.

Step 1 - Ask for 1/2 page paragraph (approximately).

Step 2 - Number paragraphs, consecutively, backwards (the last sentence is #1).

Step 3 - Rewrite each sentence on a separate paper as a list, leaving 2 or 3 spaces between sentences.

Step 4 - For each sentence, ask this question:
Would you walk up to someone and say this, expecting to be understood?
Answer yes or no for each sentence.

Step 5 - Revise all "no's" to make complete.

Step 6 - Rewrite the paragraph incorporating revised sentences.

Denise Natt
Northern Virginia Community College
Alexandria, VA

- -

Many have experienced the confusion of traffic accidents and have had to summarize correctly what happened in a few words or less on the insurance accident forms. The following quotes were taken from those reprints and were eventually published in the Toronto Sun, July 27, 1977.

Coming home, I drove into the wrong house and collided with a tree I don't have

The other car collided with mine without giving warning of its intention.

I thought my window was down, but I found it was up when I put my hand through.

I collided with a stationary truck coming the other way.

A truck backed through my windshield into my wife's face.

A pedestrian hit me and went under my car.

The guy was all over the road; I had to swerve a number of times before I hit him.

I pulled away from the side of the road, glanced at my Mother-in-Law and headed over the embankment.

In my attempt to kill a fly, I drove into a telephone pole.

I had been shopping for plants all day, and was on my way home. As I reached an intersection, a hedge sprung up obscuring my vision. I did not see the other car.

I had been driving my car for forty years when I fell asleep at the wheel and had an accident.

I was on my way to the Doctor's with rear end trouble when my universal joint gave way causing me to have an accident.

As I approached the intersection, a stop sign suddenly appeared in a place where no stop sign had ever appeared before. I was unable to stop in time to avoid the accident.

To avoid hitting the bumper of the car in front, I struck the pedestrian.

My car was legally parked as it backed into the other vehicle.

An invisible car came out of nowhere, struck my vehicle and vanished.

I told the police that I was not injured, but on removing my hat, I found that I had a skull fracture.

I was sure the old fellow would never make it to the other side of the roadway when I struck him.

The pedestrian had no idea which direction to go, so I ran over him.

I saw the slow-moving, sad-faced gentleman as he bounced off the hood of my car.

The indirect cause of this accident was a little guy in a small car with a big motor.

The telephone pole was approaching fast; I attempted to swerve out of its path when it struck my front.

Lyle Larsen
Santa Monica College

- -

(For students functioning on 7th grade level):
One day I brought a brown paper sack to class. In it were a mixture of lemons and potatoes. The college students passed the sack around the room quickly, not paying much attention to its contents. When the bag came back to the front, I asked them to briefly outline ideas for a composition. They were unable to do it successfully until they re-examined the objects--smelled--

touched and talked about them. Then we worked at the board on organization of ideas. Then we wrote outlines together. From this, at home, they wrote individual compositions, or paragraphs, on either lemons, or potatoes. Some were very ingenious!

Jo Nell Beal
Fresno City College

- -

A "Word Scattering"

I made this scattering of words from a poem which was itself made from a scattering of impressions, sun and water images. I encourage participants to tear out the words and move them around until phrases come together, then write down the phrases and scatter again. I then suggest that each make his/her own scattering of words from gathered strong impressions. I see this scattering process as a metaphor for the larger creative process, and I use it not only in poetry classes, but in composition classes to demonstrate ways of developing organic rather than simple linear order in the writing of essays. I find that working with words this way helps to free students from many of the prohibitions which inhibit them in their writing, and by moving the parts (words or phrases for poems or essays) around, they discover new ways of ordering thought. (See following page)

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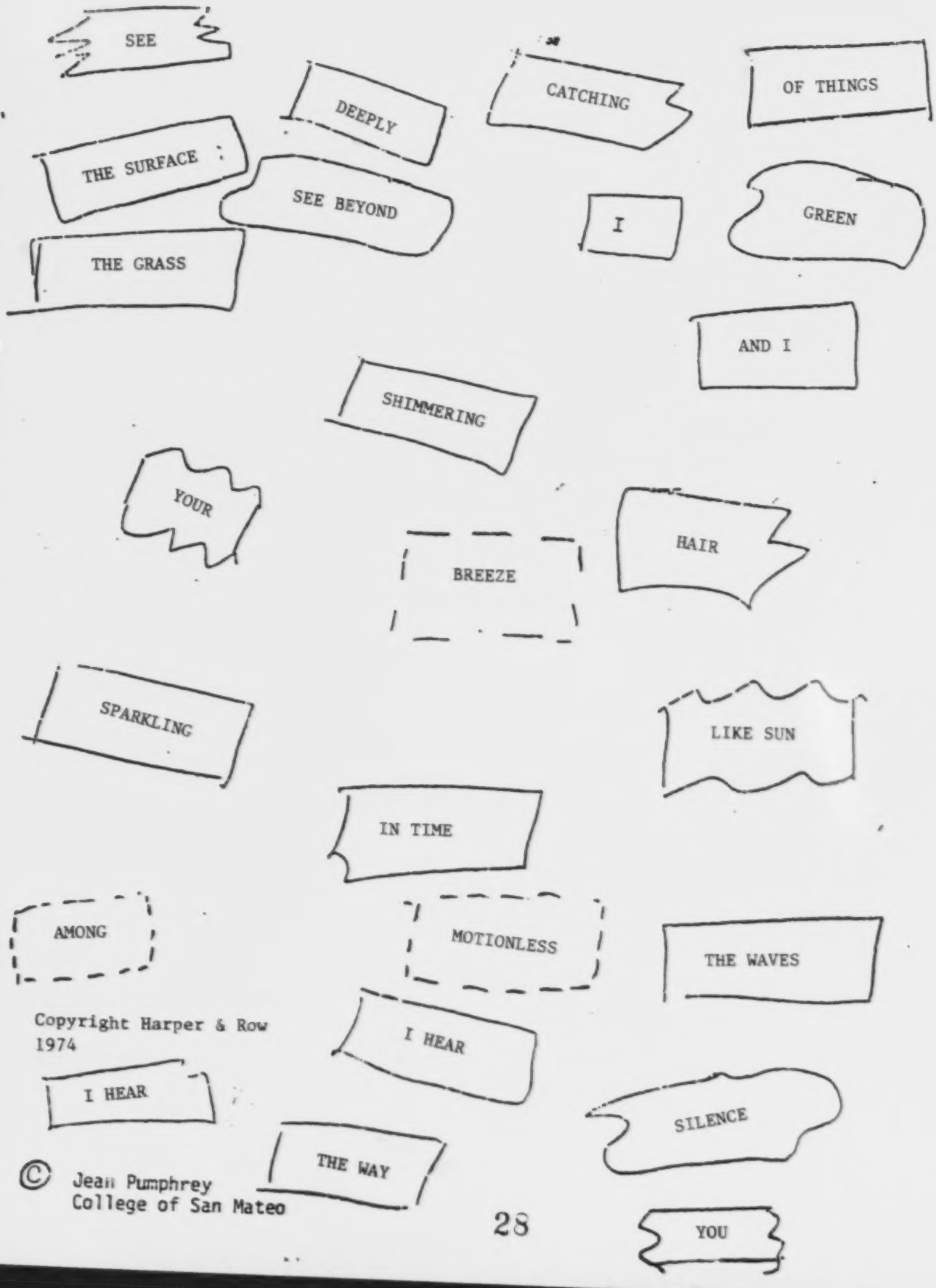

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THE PARAGRAPH

The 8-sentence paragraph is effective for English 50/Subject A and remedial classes. It provides practice in being concrete, supporting all generalizations; it also builds cohesion. The assignment sheet is my adaptation of an existing technique. The student-written examples range from good to feeble; they are exact transcriptions.

Later, of course, the "3 main points" can become topic sentences in a full essay. This expansion should occur, however, only after student has written several 1-paragraph assignments and mastered the form.

Writing the Eight-Sentence Paragraph

One way to write a full and informative paragraph is to build it inductively. The process goes like this:

1. Select a topic.
2. Write three sentences about it; space these sentences several lines apart.
3. Now for each of the first three sentences, write another sentence that supports it: illustrates it, "proves" it, or expands upon it.
4. Look over the six sentences that you have written. What are they all about? Write an introductory sentence that states the "point" of the whole passage. Put this sentence at the top.
5. Finally, write a concluding sentence that rounds off the whole idea. Put this sentence at the bottom.

. . . . . .

That's it. Of course the paragraph will need trimming and shaping, but it is complete. Here are the training steps:

6. Make sentences 1,2, and 3 stand out (those are the three main point) by giving them special openings like these:
   First,... Second,... Third,... For one thing,... Another point,... Most important,... Next,... Finally,...
7. Get rid of excessive repetition by replacing some key words with pronouns like "This," "It," "She," and "He."
8. Last, recopy the whole thing as a paragraph. Drop all numbers and write the sentences end-to-end instead of each on a new line. The next few pages will show how all this is done.

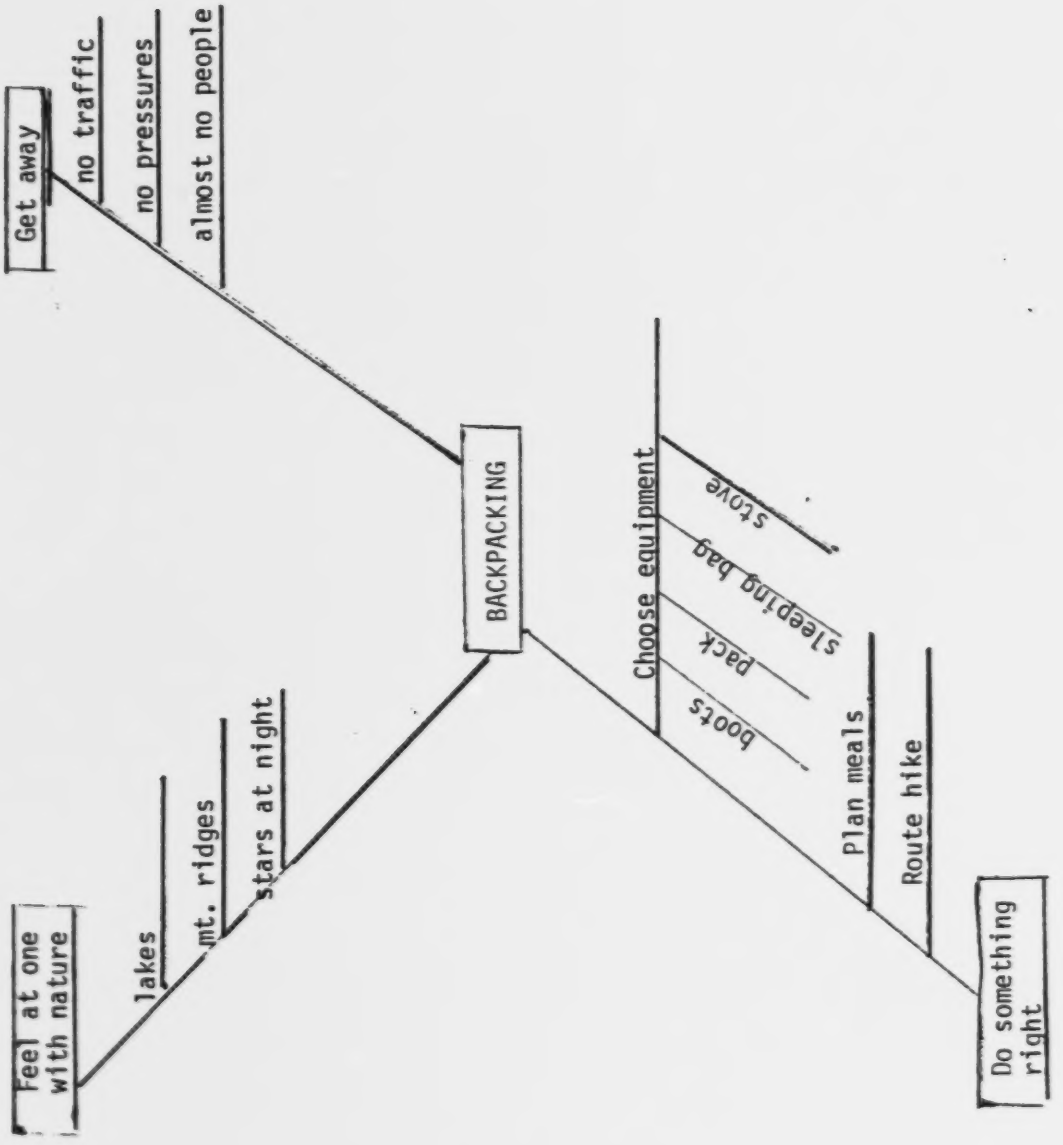
Home on Your Back

Backpacking, which may look like a fad to some, will last because it affords some enduring pleasures. First of all, of course, it is a means of getting away. On the trail there are no honking trucks and cars, no work-related pressures, and almost no people. Beyond mere escape, though, backpacking enables the hiker to feel a part of nature in some magnificent places. Green ridges stretch one beyond another until the fourth or fifth disappears in blue distance; a high snow-covered lake reveals deep pools at midday that freeze over again at dusk; the night sky is filled with stars. As an unexpected bonus, backpacking provides the satisfaction that comes with doing something right.

After the first trip out, nearly every hiker chooses equipment carefully, from boots to pack to trail food, and plans each trip so that nightfall will coincide with good stopping places and so that the whole excursion will involve fatique but stop short of exhaustion. For renewal, inspiration, and a feeling of accomplishment, spend a few days with your home on your back.

Bill Lemley
College of the Redwoods

MAP



Objective: To teach internal paragraph order (or an awareness order within a paragraph).

After my students show that they can organize an essay (over-all order), I have them select one paragraph of their essay, write each sentence of that paragraph on a strip of paper, place the strips in an envelope, and bring the envelope to the next scheduled class meeting. Then the envelopes are exchanges, and each student arranges the paragraph that he has (orders the paragraph). He tapes the paragraph on a sheet of paper and circles the words that signal order or that unify the paragraph: pronoun reference, repetition of important words, and transitional expressions. Then, each student receives his taped paragraph to compare with the paragraph in his essay. (At the end of the paragraph he writes an evaluation of the paragraph that he has ordered.)

Judy Markline
Allan Hancock College

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Introductory Paragraphs for Essays

1st: Compose a statement of purpose
(a) Choose a subject (b) narrow the subject down to a manageable topic (c) write a sentence indicating how you intend to deal with that topic--this sentence should state clearly the main idea to be developed in the essay and reveals what you are going to prove.

2nd: For your introductory paragraph(s) think of material to inform and interest your reader. Introduce your subject. Give background information to explain, if necessary. Define any unusual term or terms to be used in an unusual way. Make sure your controlling idea is clearly established. Give some indication of how you intend to develop it. A good way to do this is to mention several aspects or classes or stages into which you intend to divide it.

Catherine S. Cline
Mitchen Community College
Statesville, North Carolina

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INTRODUCTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Purpose: To demonstrate the effectiveness of an "attention getting device"
1) to gain reader's attention
2) to introduce the topic

3) to convince the reader that the material is worth reading.

Assignment: Have the student select a topic/thesis sentence (his own or one provided) and then, from a list provided, make up a number of attention getting devices to introduce the topic.

Attention-getting devices:

1. Question
2. Short anecdote or incident
3. Quotation
4. Brief statement of how supporting details will be developed.
5. Appeal to importance of topic.
6. Refer to subject or topic.
7. Refer to occasion.
8. Starting statement (shock technique)(fact or opinion)
9. Hypothetical situation.
10. Combine any of above.

Then in small groups (about 5) discuss and evaluate the attention-getting devices to discover which are best in what situations. If students use the attention-getting techniques at all they have a tendency to limit the use to one or two types, most commonly that of asking a question (any question--sometimes one not even related to the topic).

The assignment is meant to illustrate the importance of choosing the most appropriate device which can be found by experimentation.

Desmond Kilkeary
Glendale Community College

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Introduction/Conclusion/Title Exercise

(Enforces role of introduction in an essay; but, morever, it also stresses the importance of title and conclusion.)

I use this exercise early in the semester (fourth or fifth week).

1. ASSIGNMENT: Write introductory and concluding paragraphs for an imaginary essay that describes the appeal of a place, a hobby, or a person.
   Technique: Begin the introduction with an imperfection or some negative aspect stated boldly. Develop this negative aspect for a sentence or two, leading to a transition (such as "despite this" or "nevertheless") to a thesis statement that states the positive aspects of the hobby, person or place. The concluding paragraph could then refer back to this contrast.

Example #1:

Barbra Streisand has made enemies with more than a few of those affiliated with show business; various stars, actors, directors, critics, etc., consider her to be pushy, egotistical and erratic. As an actress she has had costly

temper tantrums, delaying multi-million dollar movies. As a producer she has fired writers and directors on the spot. But, with all of this, she is a tremendous talent -- a complex person worth knowing better. (Thesis)

. . . . . .

Barbra Streisand is a good actress and a tremendous entertainer. Even those, like Rex Reed, who begrudge her postures and temper displays, must acknowledge that she well deserves to be called a superstar.

2. ASSIGNMENT: Choose a different topic from the description above (place, hobby, or person) and write introductory and concluding paragraphs for it. Technique: This time begin the introduction with a quotation or a line of dialogue. The concluding paragraph could then refer or allude back to this statement.

Example #2:

"This doesn't look like much of a place." my date said nervously as I parked in front of Sanders Restaurant. Housed in a low-slung wooden frame building, Sanders Restaurant does not feature expensive decor. In fact, on a Friday night, with cars parked directly in front of its neon-decorated windows, the place is barely noticeable. (Thesis) "I've heard the seafood here is really great," I said, reassuring myself as well as her. With anticipation baiting our breaths, we entered the small restaurant.

. . . . . .

So Sanders Restaurant proved to have food that was both delicious and inexpensive. "Tee-rific," my date said as we exited onto Del Paso Boulevard, an avenue not exactly renowed for its restaurants. Not until Sanders, that is.

3. ASSIGNMENT: Make up titles for both of these imaginary essays.

Example #3:

(a) Some Stars Have Sharp Points
(b) Seafood in Sacramento!

John Tobin
American River College

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What: Introductory paragraphs must provide focus and capture the reader's attention. The following exercise attempts to demonstrate these principles.

How: Students wrote an introductory paragraph on a topic of their choice. I selected about fourteen to reproduce. Next class meeting, I distributed them and asked the students to break into small groups (2 or 3) to select the best and worst paragraphs. In twenty minutes the class reassembled to defend their selections, based on suggestion in our text.

(1) focus
(2) interest
(3) movement
(4) coherence

Why: Well, if the introductory paragraph rambles or fails to gain the reader's attention, there is little chance the reader will complete the essay. Why bother? Also, if the paragraph cannot be further developed, the writer will end up going round and round the cul de sac he has created, going no where and taking no one with him.

Marian Olson
Antelope Valley College

- -

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Marian Olson
Antelope Valley College

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THE THESIS STATEMENT AND TOPIC SENTENCE

The following is the first graded activity assignment I give in the freshman composition class. I go over the recommended procedure orally and read several sample paragraphs I've gathered from books and student writings. I discuss the positive aspects of the samples in terms of the criteria given on the assignment sheet. Then I give the rest of the period for writing the paragraphs. The next class meeting I read some of the students' work and ask everyone to watch for good descriptive passages in all the readings over the semester and bring them up for our discussion.

This assignment serves as a reference point for all the rest of the writing in the course. The topic sentence with controlling idea of course relates to the thesis for essays, and all paragraphs need details, the more sensory ones that a student can create the more effective the writing.

All the rest of my writing assignments are essays, not just paragraphs. But beginning with a paragraph has really worked. This is a very common type of assignment approach, but you asked for what works and it does.

IN-CLASS WRITING (Details)

Assignment: Write a paragraph description of a person, an object, or a scene.

Recommended Procedure:

Begin your paragraph with a sentence which, first, identifies your subject and, secondly, states the quality or qualities it has that you think most important or most interesting, or expresses an overall attitude toward it. This will become your topic sentence. The second part creates the controlling idea for the rest of the paragraph.

Then proceed to develop your paragraph with detailed sentences describing your subject so that the details show how the attitude in your topic sentence is accurate and/or justified. It often helps to describe something by comparing it to something else, especially to something people are likely to know about and be able to visualize. Use lots of details in making comparisons, too. The best kind of details will help your reader see your subject in their imaginations. But details that appeal to the rest of the senses are really good too: such details help the reader imagine how a thing smells, tastes, sounds, or feels to the touch. A good goal is to work to include at least one detail relating to each of the senses in a description. If your subject doesn't have strong characteristics for one or more of the senses, then compare it to something that does. Write from four to seven of these supporting sentences.

Finish the paragraph with a final sentence which returns to the point of your topic sentence (using different words preferably), or which comments on the significance of your subject when seen from the perspective you have just described.

Ann Clutinger
San Diego Mesa College

- -

Choose one of the topics below. Plan your paragraph by filling in the blanks beneath the topics.

1. My favorite relative--why? --a personality analysis

2. The way women teachers perform differs from the way men perform as teachers.

3. An unsual modern style (or an outlandish or expensive one) for men (or

women). (Narrow to a specific style such as hair, sport clothes, shoes.

4. Telephone conversations:

--a person I know who talks for hours.

or reasons I like (or dislike) talking on the phone.

or current transcribing or recorded messages--extremely advantageous? or insultingly impersonal?

Title?_____

Topic sentence_____

Controlling Idea_____

Main points

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Concluding sentence:_____
_____

Linda Wadleigh
El Camino College

- -

A paragraph writing assignment that always works is this: First read "How to Say Nothing in 500 Words." (The author complains that the biggest flaw in freshman writing is that it is dull.) Next, write a paragraph making a dull topic sentence interesting. I choose the topic sentences (and they are real stinkers), e.g. "Dogs are/are not man's best friend," "Football does/does not build character," or "A Women's place is/is not in the home." Generally, the results are hilarious; some good, lively writing results, too.

Jack Swanson
Canada College

- -

The following exercise is one of a series that I use to trade thesis statement and generalization.

The students found these exercises difficult, but valuable. They requested 15-20 different ones.

1. New York City lost 600,000 jobs between 1969-76.
2. In 1975, twenty buildings in prime Manhattan areas were empty.
3. Between 1970-75, ten major corporations moved their headquarters from New York City to the Sunbelt.
4. In 1976, New York City was on the brink of bankruptcy.
5. Between February, 1977 and February, 1978, New York City gained 9,000 jobs.
6. Since January, 1978, one million square feet of Manhattan floor space has been newly rented.
7. AT&T has just built a $110 million headquarters in New York.
8. IBM has just built an $80 million building at 55th and Madison in New York.
9. Co-op prices and rents have increased since 1977.
10. Even $1 million luxury penthouses are sold out.
11. There is currently an apartment shortage in Manhattan.
12. The President recently signed a bill authorizing $1.65 billion in federal loan guarantees for New York City.

from "Cognitive Development
and the Basic Writer,"
by Andrea A. Lunsford.
College English, 9/79

How would you describe the current economic trend in New York City?
Write one sentence that generalizes from the above information.

Ramona Fernandez
Sacramento City College

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III. Note particular words in headline and/or caption which can be considered emotionally loaded, such as "sensuous," "innocence," "escape," "first class."

IV. Write two or more statements of logical inference regarding verbal devices used to associate product with gratification of a specific desire or removal of a particular anxiety (fear of being unpopular, of what people will think, of not being a good mother, housewife, lover, etc.)

V. Write a one-sentence generalization about the overall intent of the ad to appeal to a specific subconscious desire or anxiety. (When going through this process on the board, instructor demonstrates that this could serve as the topic sentence for first of several paragraphs about what is going on in a specific ad.

Instructor and t.a. oversee and help students, especially those who fail to start by noting particulars. Some may start discussing the product, or copying words from the body of the text.

Now the board is erased and instructor demonstrates ladder of generalization, going from a detail in the ad, to inference about whole ad, to thesis statement about a group of such ads, such as "Many advertisers of cosmetics (toothpaste, shampoo, cigarettes, whatever the focus) use indirect appeals to subconscious desires (anxieties) which have no logical connection with the product.

After another session in which students bring in two or three ads of their own and instructor and t.a. help them outline, the students write an essay at home on the above topic. They are cautioned that not all ads use such devices and urged to carefully select ads which do use such pictorial and verbal devices as those noted above. If successful, they will have used analytical thinking, their paper will have a clearly recognizable thesis, and each paragraph will have a topic sentence.

Iris Stevenson
Santa Rosa Junior College

- -

TRANSITIONS

To teach transitions, have students pair up and alternate writing one sentence apiece. As each student adds a sentence, he must provide a transition so the piece makes sense.

Suzanne Rodrigue
Husson College
Bangor, Maine

- -

Transitions and Creative Imagination

I collect old magazines (i.e. National Geographic) and cut out pictures and laminate them. Students pair up and randomly choose 8-10 of the pictures.

Together they write a paper which has all 10 pictures (they may exchange one of the pictures if they wish) and either tells a sotry, explains something, argues something, describes something, etc.

They write one copy and then we read this in class while the pictures are shown on the overhead.

Comment: This has worked everytime and is fun. The results are always creative so they get new ideas for content and we talk about the problems with relating such unrelated pictures and filling in gaps where they didn't have a picture, but could have used one.

Maribet Mohan
Middleton, Wisconsin

- -

BEING SPECIFIC

Giving Directions

Divide a class into two groups, one half facing the blackboard and the other half the back wall. Bring scotch or masking tape and have drawn two nonsense diagrams of moderate complexity Draw one on front board, and put other on large sheet of paper and tape to back wall. Have all students write instructions on how to draw the diagram they see (must use words, no figures). Set a time limit. Then remove diagrams before they are seen by others and divide into pairs, one person from each group. Exchange papers and have students draw diagrams as they are instructed to in classmate's directions. Allow time, then show diagrams again and see how close they came. Final step: have pairs go through the directions with each other, evaluating whether they are clear or misleading or ambiguous. Show where people got lost and got false impressions. Discuss how writing could have been clearer. Discuss effective ways to do this task, e.g., some people will write in numbered steps. Make it a learning experience. Talk about the need for absolute clarity, especially in this type of task: giving directions.

Mary Ellen Bridge
Champlain College
Burlington, VT

- -

I will occasionally utilize films for reaction. One film that works well is Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge. The film works well because of its shock value. Time is distended until it's stretched to its ultimate, imagination supercedes reality, and the viewer is forced to reevaluate what he takes most for granted: the gift of life itself. After viewing this film, students are inspired to set down lists, narrow them down to specifics, and write lively paragraphs.

Beth Bajbek
Essex County College
Newark, New Jersey

- -

List four words or so across the top of a sheet of paper, and ask students to write a list of words under each word, being more specific as the lists lengthen. For example, a general-to-specific list might look like this:

furniture
living room furniture
chair
rocking chair
Early American rocking chair
genuine Early American rocking chair
refinished genuine Early American rocking chair

Then have students with this problem examine a short paper they have written, looking for and underlining any words or phrases that could be clarified by specifics, and then writing near the word or phrase whatever substitutions or additions would add clarity.

Judy Davis
Central Florida Community College
Ocala, Florida

- -

Use of Film

The problem: Reinforcing use of film or introducing importance of being specific.

Use the film "Eye of the Beholder" which takes 24 hours of a man's life and viewer "sees" this life through eyes of five people who interact with man. He is seen as thoughtless son, lunatic, lady's man, artist, murderer, gangster. After a break in film, during which students discuss which view of man is correct--if any--or a combination--the film reopens with the re-enactment of the 24 hours now as lived by the man and which, if any, previous views were correct.

Judi Burken
Kellogg Community College
Battle Creek, Michigan

- -

Point of View

Use the film "Specific is Terrific." Covers in 15 minutes, with excellent visuals and vignettes, the need for being specific in communication situations (written and verbal) including essays and letters. Combines animation with live action.

Judi Burken
Kellogg Community College
Battle Creek, Michigan

- -

Students who deal in generalities--Make broad statements and never support with details, just leave the reader hanging.

Show them how each general statement can become the topic sentence for a paragraph and fill in with specific details. Do some examples on the board and have them supply the details.

e.g. I really hate my room in Wilson Hall.
Details:
- linoleum with brown stains
- hunks gone from ceiling tile
- coffee spatters on closet door
- bilious pink paint on walls
- large yellow stains on drapes
- rusted radiator with peeling yellow paint
- phone numbers and graffiti on bulletin board
- hunks of old tape on back of door

etc.

e.g. The food in the dining hall leaves a lot to be desired.

- cold, soggy french fries
- bloody chicken
- limp lettuce with a chunk of rubber jello
- greasy hamburgers
- cardboard-tasting instant potatoes
- squash with hard lumps
- cold, unbuttered toast
- myster meat with gravy
- strong green coffee

etc.

Mary Ellen Bridge
Champlain College
Burlington, Vermont

- -

Recently I have used two quite simple essays from Someone Like Me, 3rd ed., - Winthrop Publishers as models. They are "My Wood" by E.M. Forster and "Three Days to See" by Helen Keller. The former discusses effects of proper ownership in four points. Students quickly grasp the clear organizational form, and all of them have had experience with some sort of ownership which they can analyze. With the five specifics of Keller's imagined three days of sight to consider, students have done a fine job explaining what they would want to listen to if given just three days to hear. As they list the wonderful sounds of the world they would cherish, their writngs become concrete and of course

they realize the old truism that so much around us is taken for granted and goes unappreciated.

Earle Jager
East Los Angeles College

- -

Writing a Lively Paragraph

1. Take a general term and make it specific enough to write about in a ten-sentence paragraph. First narrow down the term and ask yourself if the result is workable. Do ideas for writing spring readily to mind? Re-remember that the more specific your final term, or topic, the easier it will be to support it specifically, in a paragraph.

   Here are some terms:

BROAD	NARROW	NARROWER	NARROWEST
light			
darkness			
childhood			
youth			
city			
winter			
hunger			
appearances			
memory			

2. Choose one narrowed term. Form a lead sentence which makes a general

statement about your topic. Support it in a ten-sentence paragraph. Be specific.

Michael Goodman
Golden West College

- - - -

An exercise used with remedial students to develop texture in writing, based on Francis Christensen's invaluable little book, Notes Toward a New Rhetoric.

A simple action is performed before the class, involving two parts: the action itself--the quality of the action. The students are asked to write a single sentence accurately describing the action. Sentences are then examined for accuracy, exact words, descriptive additions, i.e., base statement plus additions. The three components--detail-quality-comparison--are considered; then movement of the sentences from general to specific. This exercise may take several days, depending on the speed with which the class absorbs the concept. Punctuation works out as a matter of separating base statements from addition. The students react well, i.e., old patterns are left behind and fresh writing emerges. For example:

Student The teacher walked into the room; she had her head high and she walked fast and she had books under her arm.
walked how? strode-----hurried, sailed, charged

Class How did she look?--agitated, anxious, annoyed

Lead into absolutes quality
agitated, The teacher charged into the room (like an angry cat,)
her head held, high. base comparison
her books tucked under her arm

Lois M. Smith
Taft College

- -

You are an undercover agent for a clandestine political organization. You are posing as a student at _____ College. You receive by mail on November 12 a coded message from headquarters. The president of a small country in South American will be visiting _____ College between 10 a.m. and 12 noon on Wednesday, November 15. His exact itinerary is unknown. You are ordered to assassinate the president while he is visting, but the assassination must appear as a case of accidental or natural death.

Describe in meticulous detail all your preparations and actions that deal with the assassination.

Vocabulary: clandestine
itinerary
meticulous

Lauri Anderson
Suomi College
Hancock, MI

- -

Non-Specific Language

1. Write a (5 sentence) paragraph using no (adjectives or adverbs)
   (3 sentence) (describing words).
2. Write a (5 sentence) paragraph using no linking verb.
   (3 sentence)
3. Never use the word thing.

Carole Bencick
Cocoa, FL

- -

Answer one of the following questions in one fully developed paragraph. Formulate your topic sentence carefully, paying special attention to key word(s) and to cohesiveness. Be sure to illustrate or substantiate your point(s) with specific reference to the text. (Text: Clark, Cox, and Craig, eds., About Language: Contexts for College Writing, 2nd. ed.)

1. Does it appear that more than imitation is involved in a child's acquisition of language? Explain.
2. Are animals "phonetically defective" or "semantically blocked"? Justify your answer.
3. Why does Conrad develop the particular quality of Yanko's language in such detail and to such length? How is it related to what happens in the end? In what ways?
4. Describe and try to account for the effect on you of Yanko's disclosure that "I had only asked for water--only for a little water..."
5. What evidence can you adduce from your readings that words are arbitrary and conventional rather than natural?

Charles Courtney
Santa Barbara City College

- -

Ambiguous

For Rent: Nice bedroom in shady neighborhood!

Take out an accident insurance policy now! One customer broke her arm the other day and we paid her $500. You may be the lucky one tomorrow.

Don't kill your wife! Let our washing machine do your dirty work!

Why go elsewhere to be cheated when you can come here!

In case of asphyxiation, apply artificial respiration until the patient is dead.

NEW AUTOS WILL HIT SIX MILLION

Chicago is almost at the bottom of Lake Michigan.

We are selling the same eggs we had last winter.

Still serving the same home-cooked chicken dinner we have served for the last 75 years.

For Sale: Big dog. Beautiful animal, good watchdog. Will eat anything. Especially fond of children.

Zanzibar is noted for monkeys. The British Governor lives there.

All people were petrified during the Stone Age.

Ever child laying an egg in the doorman's hand will be admitted free.

When a boy and girl are walking on the sidewalk, the girl should walk inside the boy.

Reports reveal that cars kill 100 people daily. Let's resolve to do better.

Try to spend an evening at the new Riviera Club. Just the thing for a dull evening.

Dresses sold for ridiculous figures.

Our motto is to give our customers the lowest price and workmanship.

The ball struck the catcher on the right temple and knocked him cold. X-ray pictures of his head showed nothing.

A check at the public swimming pool revealed some startling figures.

Wanted: Woman to sew buttons on the fourth floor.

Hear the Weatherman--the complete dope on the weather instantly.

Lyle Larsen
Santa Monica College

- -

THEME - WRITING

A. Personal Experience

I approached the following writing assignments from a personal, emotive, reaction perspective because students, in my opinion, learn to write better when they write with controlled emotion from the "I at the center" viewpoint, not to be confused with egotism. This helps them to develop a personal uniqueness of style which is what education is all about!

"Controlled reverie" is an early assignment; "Real beliefs" is a mid-term one.

This is an exercise in "controlled reverie."

Pick a time to concentrate; then listen carefully to what you are hearing at that moment. Select only one or two of the sounds and allow your imagination to take over.

Use these sounds to create a "fantasy based on truth." Let these sounds jog your mind. Your paper can be as imaginative as you wish to make it, but the real sounds you are hearing must be a central part of it. (Ex.: You hear a faucet dripping, and suddenly your mind becomes enveloped in the "drip drip: of a Chinese water torture fantasy.)

Rough it out as you are thinking; then refine and restructure the piece, carefully selecting rich, "impact" words to match tone and mood. Turn in both rough and final draft; 250 words minimum.

PLEASE RETURN THIS SHEET UNMARKED.

Topic:

What are your REAL beliefs about death, imoortality, and God. These are not necessarily the views that you state publicly.

If you wish this paper to be private, please write "confidential" in the upper left-hand corner in case we decide to read some of the papers in class.

A topic outline and 300-word minimum paper.

PLEASE RETURN THIS SHEET UNMARKED.

Joseph Coppola
San Diego City College

- -

Using Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant" as stimulus, the students discuss and write on the masks they wear and how well that mask has grown to fit.

Provides learning about description, specific support, honesty, and introspection. The latter two are the most important--usually the most difficult for a teacher to present and a student to inculcate.

R.D. Oliva
Sierra College

- -

The Essay of Speculation from Ann Rames, Focus on Composition

After some preliminary exercises in which the students guess why people choose to live alone in a cabin in the woods, choose to be vegetarians, choose to be monks, choose to teach composition, the essay is assigned. The task is to pick an event in one's life, briefly describing that event. Then the student speculates on how his life might have been different had he chosen another path. I find this assignment produces potent essays.

A reading of Robert Frost's poem, The Road Not Taken, is another way of getting into the assignment.

Carol LaBelle
Community College of Philadelphia
Philadelphia, PA

- -

I use the following as an impromptu theme assignment in English 1A early in the semester. Students who tend to be paralyzed in class by a formal topic usually find it easy to write about themselves. At the next session the class enjoys the post-mortem, when the turning-point themes are read and discussed, often with the use of an overhead projector. I get acquainted with my new students, and they learn about one another. But the time serves a hidden purpose--it's a warm-up for the Personal Journal. I now describe and assign the Journal, involving fifteen or more entries during a four-week period--and the "Turning Point" theme may be used as the first entry.

Theme Assignment: A TURNING POINT IN MY LIFE

One's life is full of turning points. Some are dramatic; others are subtle. Perhaps you once walked home from elementary school and you happened to overhear a boy practicing his cornet--and as a result you are now playing second trombone in the city symphony orchestra. Perhaps you once needed money for Christmas gifts (you wanted to buy your mother a sled)--and as a result you are now burning hamburgers for McDonalds and aspiring to open a fast food chain of your own. Perhaps you once went unwillingly on a blind date--and you met a

certain Person (together you now have two and a half offspring). Perhaps you once went on a retreat--and found religion. Perhaps you went on a retreat--and lost religion, or whatever. The possibilities are endless.

So whip out a pen and write a theme entitled "A Turning Point in My Life." TIPS: Better avoid focusing on common, obvious turning points such as your being born, or starting kindergarten, or enrolling at college. Describe an experience that is uniquely your own....Incidentally, using correct spelling and punctuation won't damage your grade...Thrown in some good grammar for variety. (Minimum: 300 words)

In my remedial classes I find PROGRAMED WRITING SKILLS (Prentice-Hall) a painless and invaluable writing aid. Students scream with pleasure when they read it. The manual converts illiterates into Phi Beta Kappans. By coincidence, I wrote it. Please, dear teachers, write to the publisher for a desk copy and for the Instructor's Manual of Tests that accompanies it.

George W. Feinstein
Pasadena City College

- -

Writing Sample
(Personalized Book Titles)

Choose one or two of the following book titles. Preferably you should choose titles of books you have NOT read. (This is not a book review.)

Deal with the title in one of the following ways:

1. How does the title reflect your personality? (Either as you see yourself or others perceive you--or both!)

2. How does the title reflect your understanding of and/or your relationship to the world?

3. How does the title reflect your past, present, or future (destination, aspiration, etc.)

THE PRAIRIE	THE SUN ALSO RISES	WUTHERING HEIGHTS
ROUGHING IT	THE PEARL	ANIMAL FARM
THE AMERICAN	BITTERSWEET	GREAT EXPECTATIONS
THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY	THE GREAT ESCAPE	SAINT JOAN
SISTER CARRIE	SWIFTWATER	LUCKY HIM
THE DHARMA BUMS	THE INCREDIBLE JOURNEY	VICTORY
THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE	THE MOUSE ON THE MOON	TO THE LIGHTHOUSE
THE LAST HURRAH	THE DEVILS	THE PLAGUE
HEAVEN'S MY DESTINATION	WAR AND PEACE	THE STRAND
BLACK LIKE ME	DEAD SOULS	BRANDED
A SEPARATE PEACE	TALES OF GOOD AND EVIL	THE TIN DRUM
RABBIT, RUN	THE BEDBUG	THE PIT
THE CALL OF THE WILD	CAT AND MOUSE	PORTAGE INTO THE PAST

THE SOUND AND THE FURY THE TRIAL THE DOCTOR AND THE DEVILS
FOR WHOM THE BELLS TOLL PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN THE GREEN PASTURES

Marlene Martin
Monterey Peninsula College

- -

1. Write a composition in which you use concrete personal experience to point to an idea or discovery of general significance or to demonstrate a lesson learned or an insight you came to realize. The significance of the experience may be about the individual, the social structure, the power of the universe, the nature of man, the failure of human relationships, alienation, etc. It may be implied in the narration of the experience or may be explicitly stated. Your insight should be meaningful to any reader but does not necessarily need to be earth shattering.

2. Imitate the authors we've read by selecting only those details of experience that lead your reader to your insight. Notice that you cannot simply report reality in a "dear diary" style, but must make reality more intense by rearranging, composing, symbolizing so as to show the value of the space-time event.

3. You may organize your essay in the autobiographical style of Douglass, the fictional autobiographical style of Wright, as a dramatic report, such as that of Dreiser, the associational style of Updike, etc.

4. Try for metaphorical or figurative language ("ingrown like a toe-nail" or "absolute geography of thighs," "arrows of to work," "a voice like that of a mynah bird").

5. To improve your style and arrive at concreteness, use at least one sentence in which you pile up noun clusters at the end of a simple structure.

Below is a simple one:

It was a heavenly place for a boy, that farm of my Uncle John's. The house was a double log one, with a space floor (roofed in) connecting it with the kitchen. In the summer the table was set in the middle of that shady and breezy floor,

and the sumptuous meals--well, it makes me cry to think of them: fried chicken, roast pig, wild and tame turkeys, ducks, geese, venison; just killed; squirrels, rabbits, pheasants, partridges, prairie-chickens; biscuits, hot batter cakes, hot buckwheat cakes, hot "wheat bread," hot rolls, hot corn pone; fresh corn boiled on the ear, succotash, butterbeans, string-beans, tomatoes, peas, Irish potatoes, cantaloupes--all fresh from the garden; apple pie, peach pie, pumpkin pie, apple dumplings, peach cobber--I can't remember the rest.

Mark Twain, "Memories of a Missouri Farm"
from Mark Twain's Autobiography

Mike Finnegan
Cherry Gundry
Orange Coast College

- -

I ask my students to describe the most important thing they ever lost.

No student has been unable to respond to this question. We talk about the subject first, and as the discussion proceeds it is quite apparent that the loss need not be material. Some have lost loved ones, or their self-confidence, or their love of writing, or their fear of heights, or the love of a spouse. Loss seems endemic to the human experience, and they like to express it.

Mary Barwise
Metropolitan Community College
Minneapolis, MN

- -

1st day [Part I - Together we read a student theme titled "Places of Pleasure." (Taken from McCrimmon text)

Analysis [Part II - Discussion followed involving identifying thesis, organization via paragraphs, general organization, unifying devices, coherence, use of parallelism, etc.
This lead to talking about things that we had seen, heard, and/or done and what we thought and felt about them.

2nd Class Meeting [Part III - Each student wrote a theme involving something that they had seen, done, and/or heard and what they had thought, learned, or felt afterward.

Edna Jameson
Yuba College

- -

Use relevant modern songs to show continuity of theme.

e.g. Andrew Malvell "To His Coy Mistress")
Bob Seger "We've Got Tonite") Ask students to write a serious/melodramatic/satirical/ or...? letter of seduction.

Amy Lowell "Patterns")
Simon & Garfunkel "Patterns) Ask students to write about a pattern in or the pattern of their own lives.

E.A. Robinson "Richard Cory")
Simon & Garfunkel "Richard Cory") Ask students to note similarities and and differences. How do they feel about Cory in each version?

The best writing tasks in this process are those in which the students put the library theme into the context of their own lives, rather than analyze the theme/ character/literary techniques in a formal paper.

Joe Nacca
Community College of the Finger Lakes
Canandaigua, New York

- -

In-Class Essay Writing

Students are allowed to use dictionaries, grammars, notes. The theme of the "What do you/think/feel" variety is given by me. The student is allowed full class time to write. The results separate the student's own writing from that which is copied or written by someone else for homework. The in-class writings (three--one of which is thrown out to allow for a bad day--low grade) must be passing work for student to pass the course. A and B out of class writings have no effect on F in-class writing. An in-class series of F's and the student fails.

Set maximum student essay langth at six paragraphs, minimun at four, without word-count restrictions. Paragraphs consist of Introduction, two to four development/ support paragraphs and a conclusion. While the length will average 300 to 500 words, the student is psychologically free of the padding syndrome. Four and six are more comfortable numbers than 300-500. Especially effective with students who have English mental blocks. Setting the maximum length also makes the student edit copy. Not surprisingly a seven or eight paragraph essay will appear with the writer saying it was originally ten or more paragraphs long and this was as much trimming as was possible without sense loss.

Judi Burken
Kellogg Community College
Battle Creek, Michigan

- -

It's been a good seven years since I taught this subject, so I'm not too clear about it. However, if I taught it again, I think I'd have the students write the story of their lives, using the symbolism of an animal, to embrace past, present, and (projected) future. I learned this from psychosynthesis training. I'd do it because (1) it would tap unconscious powers and dimensions; (2) help students get in touch with themselves at a deeper level; and (3) permit them to write in an exhiliaratingly free way; (4) it could lead to fascinating class discussions about the mind (e.g., subpersonalities) and factors encouraging and inhibiting expression.

H. Peter Kuiper
Fresno City College

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and sounds.

b. Talk to someone about it. Perhaps someone else who was there can help you fill in those details you can't recall. However, don't be reluctant in your essay to admit that you cannot recall everything about the incident.

c. Brainstorm on paper; that is, write down all the details you can remember in whatever order they come to you.

2. Outline your paper.
   a. How will you introduce your theme? How will you engage your reader's attention? Do you have a thesis statement?
   b. How will you develop your idea? Have you described the incident in sufficient detail? Have you included the people who were with you at the time? What was their reaction to the situation you describe? Where were you at the time? Give the reader a "sense of place" through your description. (Remember that the reader was not with you when the incident occurred and cannot know what you do not tell him/her in the essay.)
   c. How will you conclude your essay? Will you end it with the last fact or detail in the incident? Will you tell what emotion you feel as you relive the experience? Will you tell what emotion you feel as you relive the experience? Will you end it by explaining the significance of the event in your life?

3. Write out a first draft of the essay, following your outline. Then go over the first draft. Read it aloud.

4. Refine your sentences, Tighten your paragraphs. Examine your spelling. Take a close look at your punctuation.

5. Write a second draft, polishing and refining as you go along.

6. Type your paper double-spaced, allowing margins all around the page.

7. Proofread your paper so that you can eliminate typographical errors.

8. Relax!

Margaret Callanan
Orange Coast College

- -

I based my assignment on subjects which would be of most value to the students. For example, I emphasized our minds are like magnets which attract whatever we dwell on, and told them to concentrate on happy experiences, things which they have to be grateful for, as these are the things which will grow and DEVELOP IN THEIR LIVES. Of course, I also used Warner's Handbook and Workbook, reviewed the rules of grammar, sentence and paragraph structure, and told them I expected them to review the errors in their compositions and try to improve on their next ones. They all amazed me. They did!

One of the compositions I assigned was "Three Habits I Would Like To Change for the New Year." Since our good and bad habits are our best friends or worst enemies in attaining our goals in life, they deserve top priority and follow-up. A bad habit can get out of control, like a forest fire, and take over our lives and ruin life-long friendships, marriages, jobs, etc. Habits don't stand still. They get better or worse and cannot be neglected any more than a tooth-ache or car trouble can be neglected. You'd be surprised at the many mature compositions I got, together with improved grammar and mechanics.

Lori Julian
San Diego City College

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B. Process

I found that I had turned a turkey into a phoenix by making my process assignment applicable only to human situations. Previously I had counseled against simple procedural matters such as how to change a tire. But by limiting the process to a human situation I weeded out the pedestrian approaches and discovered an amazing number of imaginative essays, such as how to cope with weight loss, how to baby sit unruly children.

I further specified that the human situation should be one not commonly approached as a process, that students should conceive of the audience as a younger brother or sister.

Furthermore, I assigned a "horror story" introduction, an anecdote containing the major pitfalls of approaching the situation without a process in mind. Then in the course of the process they showed how each pitfall could be avoided --a useful exercise in organization as well.

Michael Runyan
Saddleback

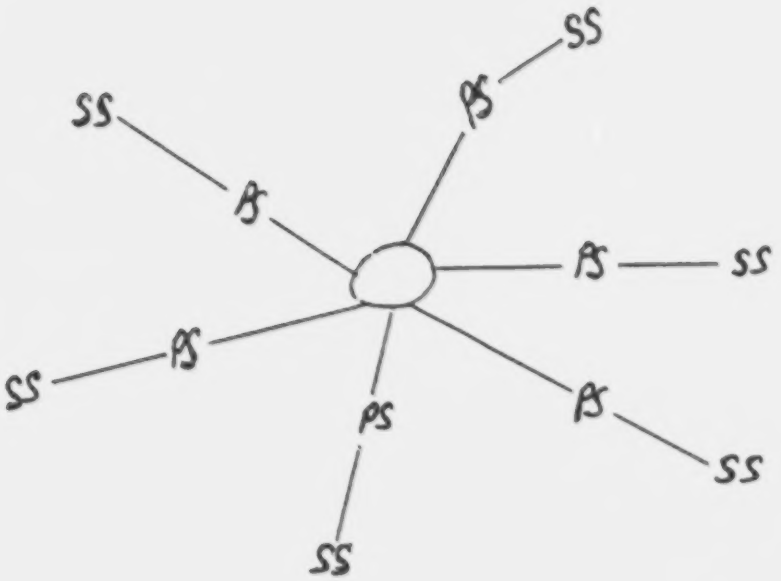
- -

Teaching the Black Student how to Write the Process Theme from Experience

I first found that trying to teach some black students process was difficult since the traditional "sailboat rigging" was unfamiliar.

So, I chose something they knew about--the welfare check--and had them write about the "process" of spending it. Then, I went back to the traditional theme steps and asked them to apply the rules learned in the other process.

Teaching students the relationship beteen the topic sentence, primary and secondary support when constructing a paragraph.



By having students use this diagram, they can clearly see each sentence's relationship to another. Students are first given a paragraph and are asked to read and "plot" it as above. These are checked. Then they are asked, as a second assignment, to write a TS of their own, have it approved and develop PS & SS sentences to develop a coherent, unified paragraph.

Marietta Scott
Sacramento City College

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In Class Writing Task

This paper is to describe a process, using appropriate process organization.

Choose one of the following topics, narrowing it as necessary.

1. Describe the functioning of any one of the following processes: applying for a first driver's license, getting ready for a party, preparing to wash dishes in a dishwasher, or stripping a piece of furniture for refinishing.

2. Give directions on how to perform one of the following processes: taking proper care of one's teeth, fixing a simple breakfast, studying a chapter in a textbook, or getting to a particular Bay Area location on the bus.

3. Describe, from personal observation, one of the following processes: how your street's appearance changes with the seasons, what happens when the fog comes in, how a dog or cat turns from a puppy or kitten to a grown animal.

Remember to divide the process into steps and to deal with each step individually; remember to follow chronological order; remember to develop with adequate detail.

Check that the paper has a title.

The essay, like all of your in-class essays, should be written in dark ink on ruled white notebook paper, should have a right-hand margin as well as a left-hand one, should be written on just one side of the paper. Proof-read when you are through and make corrections as needed.

Fold the finished paper lengthwise and put the information on the outside as for Essay 1.

Susan Petit
College of San Mateo

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C. Description

A successful writing task I have incorporated in my freshman composition course as well as interpersonal communication classes, which I also teach, is based on the "Trust Walk." (This walk is used in my psychology and interpersonal communication classes.)

First, I divide the class into two groups. The first group is given blindfolds (bands measuring 4" wide and 18" long and made from old sheets serve very well). People from the second group form partnerships with people in the first group. Thus, each pair has a blindfolded individual and a person to guide him/her. It is the responsibility of the guide to make his/her charge feel comfortable and safe. The guide should also provide as rich a walk as possible so that the blindfolded person experiences a multitude of sensory experiences such as feeling water and textures of trees and buildings, hearing people chatting and engines purring, tasting food and water, and smelling aromas from a cafeteria or coffee shop and fragrances from bushes or flowers.

After the partners have engaged in the "Trust Walk" for 20-25 minutes, they switch responsibilities so that the guide is now blindfolded and the guided becomes the guide. Again, a variety of sensory experiences is to be afforded to the blindfolded person.

At the conclusion of the walk I ask the students to quickly record everything they have experienced. These lists and notes become the basis for a descriptive composition which can be written at home. I instruct the students to write clearly and graphically about what they experienced as both the guided and the guide.

A nice bonus from this experiential writing assignment is the natural possibility of a lively discussion in which participants can share their actions

and reactions.

Thus, this descriptive paper has afford the students an opportunity to experience, to act, and react, to record, and to discuss; therefore, they have had an opportunity to communicate in several very significant ways.

Walden A. Leecing
Chabot College

- -

Description

Materials needed: lemons, knives, napkins

Divide students into pairs or small groups and have them write down (list) characteristics of lemon. Reconvene and ask each group/pair for their ideas and list them on the board.

An essay, "The Lemon" in Here and Now, is something appropriate to read afterwards.

Melanie Wuchenich
Kettering College of Medical Arts
Kettering, OH

- -

This is not a writing task per se, but it is used in conjunction with one. In teaching observation as a prelude to description, I take two hard-boiled eggs to class. One of the eggs is passed hand-to-hand among students, permitting them to use one of their own often neglected senses--touch.

The other egg I hold aloft, asking class members to describe its shape, color, sizse, and texture. We discuss gradations of color (ivory, alabaster, snowy, and chalky), shape (round and oval), texture (smooth or pitted), and the simple efficient form of "packaging" that eggs have. Eventually, students conclude that an egg is oval, tapers at one end, and is chalky in color.

A more difficult task involves deciding what an egg is. One member of the class keeps notes as we work toward a consensus about the chicken's egg. The class eventually concludes that an egg is an oval body laid by a female bird, fish, or reptile that contains the germ of new life in a protective shell.

Finally, I ask students to think of expressions based upon the word egg. Some common costs: egghead, eggnog, to egg on, walking on eggs, laying an egg, and putting all of one's eggs in one basket.

During this 15-minute exercise students practice observation, description, definition, and use of figurative language. Division and classification can be

included. The exercise is followed by a writing assignment that requires them to closely observe an object and describe it for someone who has never seen it.

Art Carey
San Jose City College

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The following project was implemented at San Jose City College in the Learning Assistance Center.

BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVE: Students will use illustrative language in developing a descriptive paragraph.

PHASE 1
Discuss the difference between concrete and abstract words and the fact that each individual has come to attach mental images to words, whether they be abstract or concrete, which are unique to that person's life-experience. (i.e. I may associate the image of a warm fire and a cup of hot tea with the term 'happiness'; whereas another person may envision skipping through the park. Similarly, the image which I associate with the word 'table' may differ in many particulars from my neighbor's.)

PHASE 2
Construct a vague, underdeveloped paragraph which indicates the objects and plant-life in a garden (concrete), and its aesthetic value (abstract). Ask students to create a vivid impression for the reader from the outline on the board, by inserting adjectives, adverbs, phrases, and entire sentences if necessary. A stripped down paragraph may read as follows:

> I enjoy gardening. My garden is beautiful because it contains flower-beds, pathways, bushes, and trees. I plant things which give me pleasure all the time.

Place the paragraph on the board.

PHASE 3
Direct each student to write a descriptive paragraph.

PHASE 4
Direct each student to read his/her paragraph to the group. After each reading discuss the effectiveness of the modifiers which were used. (i.e. the phrase 'flame colored roses' creates a better image than does 'red roses'). At this point students will see the need to use more detailed, illustrative langauge to paint a picture for the reader.

The following is one of the improved descriptive paragraphs:

> I get a special enjoyment from gardening because, while I dig, I breathe in the scent of the moist, life-giving earth; and this helps me to relax. My garden contains five circular flowerbeds, containing marigolds and fire red roses, which are surrounded by polished rocks and pitted bricks that are overgrown with deep green moss. Graveled pathways lined with juniper bushes wind between them. The cherry

trees which I planted between the junipers have glossy purpose leaves which hide the red fruit. The variety of color in my garden provides a pleasant diversion for the eye all year 'round.

Unsigned

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I ask my English 1A (College Composition) students to write a description of an imaginary painting in an imaginary place. I give them a subject/title for the painting. Some subject/title handles I have used in the past are LIFE, DEATH, BIRTH, HAPPINESS, SADNESS, ALONE. I tell them they must include details and must work in an organized manner--from left to right or from foreground to background, etc. I also insist that they put in a mood sentence that sets the mood for the whole painting. The results are astonishing. For most of my students here at Sacramento City College, such an assignment makes them think about writing in a way they have not done since fourth grade. Making each student compose a picture in his or her mind and then having him or her translate this picture into words is a jewel of a task. This style of assignment actually gets students into thinking-writing. I have found that telling students what I mean by thinking-writing is about as meaningful as asking Jimmy Carter to think like a Moslem. However, getting them to do the imaginary painting paper puts them in the middle of a thinking-writing assignment.

Jerry Fishman
Sacramento City College

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Descriptive Essays

1. Visit a park, museum, or library in Los Angeles County.
2. If you visit a large park, museum, or library, write your essay about one small part of it.
3. Jot down some notes as you observe the area you have chosen.
4. When working on your essay, first write an outline.
5. Base your paper on a thesis, a controlling concept, a main idea. Write your thesis at the beginning or at the end of your essay and underline it.
6. Take special care with your introduction and your conclusion.
7. Write in a style which is simple and direct. Avoid language which is emotional or flamboyant.
8. Do not use the words "I" or "me."

9. Your essay should have a title (usually the name of the park, museum, or library written or typed in capital letters. Example: DOUGLAS PARK).

10. Allow time for rewriting or typing your final draft.

Claire O'Connell
Santa Monica College

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It is the year 10,896. You are a member of an expedition from Anatares IV to the third planet of the sun Sol. You and your companions can best be described as birdlike creatures--beak, feathers, wings,claws, etc. (You look like a chicken actually!)

Following your landing on Sol III, you discovered that the planet's surface is covered with masses of rubble, much of it slightly radioactive. Preliminary investigations disclose that the planet once suported a civilization which vanished in some sort of holocaust, either nuclear or cosmic in origin. Nothing remains but undifferentiated rubble ... and ONE intact artifact (a toilet bowl). Use very little of this paragraph in your memo. But if you do use it, at least put the information in your own words.

This artifact is a complex bowl-shaped item made of vitreous china--it says so on the bowl but you don't know what it means, of course. Now you must write a one-page report to your superior on your home planet, fully describing your find, and speculating on its possible purpose and what it can tell you about the vanished life-forms of this planet. (Concentrate on the object... describe it...speculate on its purpose. Only briefly comment upon anything else, if at all.) This way we can keep writing to a single page.

As you write this report, bear in mind that YOU ARE A BIRD. You see everything through a bird's eyes, and think with a bird's mind conditioned by a bird's experiences. You know nothing about the physical or mental characteristics of the beings that once inhabited Sol III. You do NOT know that you have found a toilet bow (no seat, hinges, tank, tank top, piping, etc.)

Use your imagination, but stay within the bounds of reason and the situation described above. Treat this as a serious writing assignment.

# # # # # # # # # # # # # # # #

Your first problem before writing is "How do I think like a bird?" What is important to a bird? How does a bird investigate something strange? How does it pick up and manipulate things? As a bird, you do not know the meaning of inches, feet, etc. You have no conception of what human beings look like, if such an animal even exists! Etc.

Lotsa luck!

P.S. Use drawings if you wish but still a type of minimum 25 lines. If this is to be an in-class, handwritten assignment, then write a minimum of 200 words.

Special instructions:

1. Use a "personal" style of writing.
2. Use few or no passive verbs.
3. Use a tabulation (listing) at some point in your memo.
4. Watch your grammar, punctuation, paragraphing, paralelism, clarity, etc.

Donald E. Anderson
Grossmont College

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Writing Apprenticeship

Six Descriptive Paragraphs

Three people - a) physical description b) personality sketch c) person in action
Three places - a) exterior scene b) interior scene c) natural scenery

1) Title each paragraph
2) Write dominant impression (lead) sentence
3) Twelves items to support lead sentence, jotted at random
4) Eliminate three of the least important.
5) Label the nine in sequence of importance.
6) Incorporate those nine into a descriptive paragraph.

R.L. Cowser, Jr.
Wharton County Junior College
Wharton, Texas

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Verbs - Conditional Tense

Students seem to enjoy a writing assignment that begins, "If I win the sweepstakes...." It also gives them, in addition to could/would practice, more experience with descriptive detail: "Exactly what kind of car, house, boat would you buy?" Etc. Many more mature students often end by saying something to the effect that they know they cannot really buy love or happiness.

Carolyn Christensen
Daytona Beach Community College
Daytona Beach, Florida

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Imagine you want to go into business. Visit a restaurant and write a description of locale, accessibility, parking, quality of food, decor, service, etc., to convince your partner that the place is worth buying. Take two weeks to jot down everything you can under the various readings suggested above. If possible, interview the manager/owner as to turn over, food suppliers, costs, and profits.

Peter Williams
Delaware Technical and Community College
Wilmington, Delaware

- -

Describing a Place

Write a 300-word essay describing a place. In your essay, do not use any form of the verb to be, i.e., am, is, are, was, were, being, been, etc, You will have to convert sentences such as It was raining hard to sentences like Huge raindrops hammered on the rooftops; The sky was blue to White, fluffy clouds scattered across a blue sky; Bill is handsome to Bill looks like Paul Newman.

One way to do this assignment is to pick a location with a great amount of activity going on in it. That way, you can describe the place in terms of the action occurring in it and more easily use action-describing verbs instead of forms of to be. One recent paper for this assignment described the space in front of a MacDonald's hamburger counter. The writer was able to describe people's appearances and actions, the sounds and the smells, as well as the architecture and decorations. Or you may choose to describe a particularly beautiful or memorable place--a building, or a country scene, perhaps. Maybe you'll prefer to describe a more familiar place like the school library or your family kitchen.

Whatever place you decide upon describing, remember to use vivid, detailed description. Also, give your discussion an organization; let your reader know where he is standing with you as you describe this place by using directive words and phrases like "above" the clock on the wall," "to the left of the stone columns," "far behind" these trees and so on. Of course you'll rely heavily on visual sensations, but don't forget how things feel, how they sound, smell, or even taste as well. One interesting paper I got described a squalid men's room in a bus station. I leave it to your imaginations to think of what the writer was able to do with that subject.

Bob Dees
Orange Coast College

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Descriptive Theme Assignment

From first-hand experience, write a theme in which you describe one of the following:

a. A place, preferably some limited geographical area which you have a special interest in and fondness for;
b. A journey (combine description with narrative);
c. A street bazaar or some other colorful scene or event (e.g., art displays on the boulevard, a carnival, a circus, etc.);
d. A family get-together, preferably on some special occasion like an anniversary, a birthday, or a national, religious, or ethnic holiday;
e. An unusual person--perhaps a relative, a friend, a neighbor, an employer, or a street character;
f. A busy lunchtime in a restaurant, coffee shop, campus center, or cafeteria;
g. An air, railroad, or bus terminal;
h. A hotel lobby;
i. The poolside activity at a resort on a sunny, warm afternoon;
j. A theatrical performance.

The length of this theme can, as in the 'process' theme, be varied, I would suggest nothing longer than es. 500 words.

Some guidelines:
(1) Use specific details in your description; be informative.
(2) Good description requires that you use all of your senses and faculties. Provide sense impressions to what you are describing.
(3) You may describe both the physical attributes of things and your own feelings toward them.
(4) Assume a point of view in your description--i.e., take a particular stance or emphasize some special characteristics of your subject.
(5) Choose vivid words and strong images in describing your subject.
(6) Endeavor to put your reader in the presence of what you are describing.

For further information on descriptive writing, refer to pp. 152, 155-156, and 176-178 in Readings for Writers.

This theme will need to be completed and ready to be turned in on _____.

Guy H. Peterson
Santa Barbara City College.

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Diction

The descriptive paragraph below was written by Mark Twain, one of America's most distinguished authors. Read the paragraph carefully. Do not turn the page over. Is the paragraph good description? Fair description? Poor? Jot down your reasons for your answer briefly to the left of the paragraph. When you have finished, turn the paper over.

******

It was a crisp and spicy New England morning in early October. The lilacs and laburnums, lit with the glory fires of autumn, hung burning and flashing in the brilliant air, a fairy bridge provided by kind Nature for the wingless wild things that have their home in the treetops and would visit together. The larch and the pomegranate flung their purple and yellow flames in broad splashes along the slanting westward sweep of the woodland; and the sensuous fragrance of innumerable deciduous flowers rose upon the atmosphere in a swoon of incense. Far in the empty sky, a solitary pharynx slept among the empyrean on motionless wing. And everywhere brooded stillness, serenity, and the peace of God.

****

Definitions and questions:

lilacs:	Bloom only in the early spring. In fall, the bushes are dusky green.
aburnum:	A Eurasian variety of poisonous tree or shrub, not common in northeastern United States.
"hung burning and flashing"	How do plants "hang" in air? A flash is sudden, abrupt. How is air "brilliant"? (Or "dull"?)
"wingless, wild things"	Monkeys? Squirrels? A bridge over "hanging" plants?
larch	Commonly called tamarack or hackmatack in New England; has short, pine-like leaves in bunches, generally a bluish-green color.
pomegranates	Usually found in hot, arid regions of the Near East, though they are occasionally cultivated in the southern U.S. Leaves are bright green. The plant has orange-red flowers, with red berries. "Purple and yellow flames"?
fling a flame	("flung their purple and yellow flames...") How, left-handed? In splashes? How do you fling a flame that splashes?
deciduous flowers	All flowers are deciduous.
swoon	A fainting fit or attack.
pharynx	The part of the alimentary canal between the mouth cavity and the esophagus. What's it doing in the sky?
empyrean	The highest heaven.
brooded:	To brood is to dwell continuously and moodily on a subject. Does "serenity" brood? Does stillness brood? Etc.

******

Obviously, the paragraph is nonsense. Indeed, Mark Twain wrote it for a young, would-be writer friend as nonsense, to show that what may "sound" impressive, or seem to be "artistic" can often be meaningless. So, the paragraph is a spoof, a joke. (A "spoof" says the dictionary, is nonsense; tomfoolery; a hoax.)

Ann Hostetler
(from Bonnie Robinson)
Golden West College

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D. Narration

Anecdote (Narration Within Exposition)

Despite the fact that storytelling is narration rather than exposition (i.e., explanation), student writers may choose to relate a very brief incident, or anecdote, to illustrate a topic sentence. Such a narrative, therefore, has an expository purpose because it helps to develop the central idea of the paragraph(s). The use of an anecdote can serve as detail or illustration to support the topic sentence in the paragraph being developed.

Beginning with a topic sentence, write an anecdotal paragraph of 100-150 words which illustrates one of the following points:

1. Men are more vain than women (or vice versa).
2. Poor handwriting can get you into trouble.
3. Rebellion doesn't always bring happiness.
4. Dogs are not man's best friend.
5. People enjoy being fooled.
6. Gum chewing can be as expensive as smoking.
7. Children are not always a blessing.
8. Knowledge is not always power.
9. Communication is more difficult than you might think.
10. Sunday is seldom a day of rest.
11. Pleasure-seeking is not always pleasant.
12. My mother (father, boy friend, etc.) has a strange habit.
13. Tyranny can victimize the tyrant.
14. Living in the future can jeopardize the happiness of the moment.

When setting up the paper for the paragraph, indicate the number of the topic being written about in the upper left corner (Arabic numerals). As in the past, fold the papers vertically and endorse (name, English 1, and date) on the back of the folded sheet, keeping the fold to the left when you endorse. This assignment will be due _____.

Guy H. Peterson
Santa Barbara City College

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I find that very few of my students have ever been in a used-book store. Many are unaware that such delightful places even exist. So I make an assignment for them to visit at least one. I hand out a list of our local stores, the proprietors of which I all know very well. Students write about their book store tour.

The experience is nearly always a revelation for the student and each has a different story to tell. Since books are the very hammers and saws in the toolbox of the academician-scholar-reader, it proves to be remarkably successful.

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Maurice Dunbar
Foothill College

- -

E. Comparison/Contrast

Analogy

In no more than 240 words make a comparison between two things for the purpose of making one of them clearer. Find a concrete, familiar thing for an abstract idea or a subtle emotion. Or find a very unfamiliar thing and make strange comparison to startle your reader, to make him think in a new way.

P.S. If the analogy gets overworked, stop. Then try a new analogy, and then another. Have at least 240 words worth of analogies.

Write FIRST COPY at the top of your paper. Have two classmates read and evaluate your paper on this form and sign their names. Rewrite based on what you value in their comments and on what you discover yourself. Label this REWRITE and turn all (FIRST COPY, REWRITE, two evaluations) in to me.

For additional help, Altick's Preface to Critical Reading is on reserve in the library. See also Winterowd The Contemporary Writer, Chapter 13, and pp. 185-189 in Baker, The Complete Stylist and Handbook. In the library media, see videotape on metaphor by Robinson.

Editing

1. What two things are being compared?
2. Find three or four specific details. Note them here.
3. Can you follow the order?
4. Does any word choice puzzle you or seem inexact? What word?
5. Is the focus clear, the direction straight? If it gets foggy or crooked, where?
6. What about mechanics? It's hard to proofread one's own material. If you spot a fragment or a strange spelling, tell the writer.
7. Analogy or metaphor or simile presents special problems.
   A. Is it a mere comparison (Geography 106 is like Geography 160) or is it an analogy (You know dear, life is like a movie)?
   B. Is the comparison appropriate?
      "The judge leaped his last hurdle on the way to the Supreme Court!" In a serious paper, a judge with his robes hiked up as he leaps through the air is probably inappropriate. If you intended to startle, to satirize, it might work well--showing an undignfifed scramble for power.
   C. Is the comparison consistent, not mixed?
      A classic example of the mixed metaphor is "I smell a rat, I see it hovering in the air. I shall nip it in the bud!"
8. Give comments on what impressed you and suggestions for improvement.

Bonnie Robinson
Golden West College

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After spending a fair amount of class time comparing and contrasting various elements, characters, and so forth from among several short stories, I ask students to write a comparison/contrast paper (450 to 500 words), the specific choice of subject being their responsibility. Further directions:

1. Avoid superficial comparisons (both stories about women, both set in the South, and both take place in the summertime, e.g.). With a colleague from the class in mind, choose a subject for comparison that will enhance his or her understanding and/or appreciation of one or both stories; assume your classmate has read the stories but your topic has not occurred to him or her. Your task is to assert the comparison to be valid, support it, and explain the implications of giving consideration to this particular similarity.
2. Consciously organize your paper according to one of the following patterns:

   First paragraph: a. A point of comparison in one story
   b. A point of comparison in both stories

   Second paragraph: a. Same as above but focussing on the second story.
   b. A second point of comparison in both stories, etc.
   c. The central difference between the stories; what's unique to each.*

Why I use the comparison/contrast paper:

1. Organization is easy and highly visible; students have the experiences of working within a structure--consciously.
2. One reason to become educated is to be able to see relationships among disparate things; classes are usually specialized, compartmentalized. Here students are asked to back away and look at a dozen or more stories in an effort to see relationships and similarities that may be explored profitably in a composition.
3. This particular assignment is one they will encounter from time to time during their college careers.

*i.e., what is unique with regard to that which is being compared, that which is similar in other respects.

Jack Miles
Allan Hancock College

- -

"Marrakech," George Orwell
Explanatory Comparison Writing Assignment

1. Write an explanatory essay in which you show the similarities between Orwell's description in "Marrakech" of his interaction with the gazelle and the relationship that seems to exist between a colonized people and their

colonizers.

2. Or write an explanatory essay in which you explain the meaning generated by Orwell's repeated comparisons in "Marrakech" of people and animals.

3. Or, you may make some other significant statement of comparison based upon "Marrakech" and write your essay in its support.

Be careful to support your explanation by referring to all parts of the essay which supply confirming evidence. If your thesis is correct, that is, if it states one of the meanings intended by Orwell, he will have placed supporting material throughout his essay for you to find and utilize.

Sample thesis statements to be used or imitated or ignored:

Orwell looks at the gazelle the same way colonizers look at a colonized people.

The gazelle tries to establish a "colonial" relationship with Orwell.

The native people seem to be treated like animals by both the colonizers and each other.

"Colonial empires are in reality founded upon the fact that it is always difficult for the colonists to believe that they are walking among human beings" like themselves.

Gordon Barrett
West Valley College

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F. Definition

Topic: In Through the Looking-Glass, Alice and Humpty-Dumpty have a heated discussion over what words can mean. Humpty says he can make words mean anything that he wants them to mean and when he tells her one of his definitions, Alice says, "That's a great deal to make one word mean." Humpty replies, "When I make a word do a lot of work like that, I always pay it extra."

Pretend that you are an employer of words and are required to pay them wages. Pick a word or phrase that you would have to pay extra and tell why it would want more pay.

My writing of the task follows:

I'm glad school ended last week because the phrase "good job" was just on the verge of walking off the job and that would not have been good. For years I've relied on "good job" as encouraging commentary to students writing all sorts of compositions and the phrase has earned more overtime than "effective," "interesting," "successfully," and "amusing" combined. We've negotiated wages several times before. More than a year ago I agreed to pay time and a half whenever I

used "good job" with a clause that began with "but" as in "you did a good job in developing your topic idea but you need to work on transition." That settled the situation for fall quarter, but by winter they told me they'd want double time anytime I began a critique with a sentence like "you did a good job of developing your topic idea, but watch your spelling, subject verb agreement and word choices. "Good" felt like he was being exploited when used with a "but" clause followed by a series. "Job" felt like she was only doing her job, but good won out. After that spat, "good" became even more radical and started charging that my use of him in a comment like "you are doing a good job in remembering to use periods, but continue to work on commas, semi-colons and apostrophes" was maligining his true function and destroying his specificity and to maintain his professional integrity, he refused to work with me in anything but simple sentences. "Job" is still loyal to me, but "good" is threatening to leave her because she's too docile. I'm sure that "effective" or "successful" would be glad to take up with her, but they've joined "good"'s union and I know they'd charge double time even if I said, "You did an effective job in developing your topic idea, but watch punctuation." So next semester I'll say, "You did a job in developing your topic sentence. Watch your spelling, subject verb agreement and word choices." It's rumored that in September "but" will start charging overtime for every item in a series.

Peggy Pryzant
Modesto Junior College

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G. Classification

Classification is one of the most common kinds of organization and is often used even when an essay's overall pattern is different, to deal with a part of the subject. That is one reason it is usually discussed early in a semester.

When a subject is broken up into parts, using classification, those parts should be approximately equally important and mutually exclusive--check this carefully--and no part of the subject should be left over after the division into parts.

Choose one of the following subjects; focus in on a topic; develop a thesis about the topic which can be supported through classification.

> the fall television shows, current films, greeting cards, college teachers, American cities, local restaurants, part-time jobs, popular songs, football or baseball teams.

Remember that each classification you have created should be discussed in turn, with adequate supporting detail. Try to make the paper's end climactic by putting the most interesting or important category last.

Susan Petit
College of San Mateo

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Sociologists sometimes divide people into three major categories:

CLASSIFICATION	CHARACTERISTICS
Dionysian	animal energy, exhuberance, impulsiveness (swashbuckling, devil may care attitude
APOLLONEAN	balanced, restrained, disciplined, ordered. logical, rational
PROMTHEAN	action oriented, fearless courageous, strong, ambitious

Write a paper that incorporates all the above classifications or a single classification. Initially, describe the God from whom the characteristics are derived. You might follow this up with events in the life of that deity. Next, you may want to identify parallel cases of types from history, literature, theatre, sports, or any other field. Finally, try to identify yourself as one of the above categories, or try to argue against the system of classification into types. The above are only suggestions. Feel free to discover your own method of organization.

Possible Choices

DIONYSIAN	Byron (19th century Romantic, English poet) Falstaff (Shakespeare's character in Henry IV and V) Henry VIII (King of England) D.H. Lawrence (English novelist) Walt Whitman (American poet) Tom Jones (Character in Field's novel Tom Jones) Aristo's Orlando Furioso (Italian novelist) Cellini (Italian novelist) Don Quixote (Novel by Cervantes)
APPOLONEAN	Plato (Greek Philosopher, 500 B.C.) Aristotle (Greek philosopher, about the same time as Plato) Flaubert (French novelist) E.B. White (Contemporary American writer) Jefferson (American President) Lawrence Olivier (English actor) Woodrow Wilson (American President) Thomas Aquinas (Medieval Christian Mystic) Solomon (Biblical character) Montaigne (French philisopher) David Niven (Actor) George C. Marshall (American General, World War II)
PROMETHEAN	John Paul Jones (Naval hero, American War of Independence) General Dougas McArthur (General in second World War) Napoleon (French General) Julius Caesar (Roman Emperor)

Wagner (Musical Comoser)
Teddy Roosevelt (American President)
King David (Biblical Character)

Eira Patnaik
Frostburg State College
Frostburg, Maryland

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"The Day I was Born": Ask students to read the N.Y.Times for the day they were born. Based on what they find, they write an essay in which they discuss the way the world was on that day. In addition to the obvious important events of the day, indicate that day should look at advertisements, entertainment and sports sections, weather reports, even want ads. This is a useful exercise in classification, and students almost always find it interesting. This is also an especially good writing assignment for the instructor to do along with the class.

Michael Pilz
Bucks County Community College
Newton, PA

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H. Argument and Persuasion

I usually assign an argument paper as the final class assignment, asking the students to choose from among several formal modes. One way of teaching them the nature of an extended syllogism that usually works involves discussing inductive and deductive logic extensively, then (this is the important step) assigning to the class the outlining of the Declaration of Independence as an extended syllogism that utilizes inductive to support the minor premise.

Dennis Ross
Butte College

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What: A practical application of logical fallacies in persuasion.
Why: To develop awareness of what fallacy is and why the writer utilizes it?
How: Students often have difficulty "understanding" logical fallacies in their writing. I have found they become more aware of them if they write them in on purpose. We discuss a number of "persuasive" essays that fail because they name-call-over-generalize, either or thinking, lack of definition, lack of

evidence or contrary evidence, post-hock, etc. Then I have the student defend a topic they care about. (Final exams should not be required; the commitment of marriage is/is not necessary to a lasting relationship) and support it with the WRONG kind of examples and reasons. They make a list of particular fallacies of which they are guilty

lack of definition - morality, risk
false analogy - cookie crumbles/America crumbles
limited sampling - J. Crawford, R. Kennedy, guy...
emotive language - rejects, wishy-washy, aborted from womb...

Then the class exchanges essays in groups of 3-5, find errors, read best essays from group to class-at-large.

AMERICA, the Crumbling Rock

I am an American, and I can see the crumbling morality of this country. When rock crumbles, the cliff is eroded away. So it is with America: the moral rock is crumbling, and America's power will erode away. Once America stood for people who were willing to risk for their goals; today it is filled with people who grumble if their unemployment check is late. Once it stood for people who worked hard to provide food, shelter and opportunities for their children to become happy, productive citizens; today it is filled with people who don't even know where their children are. Once, when a couple pledged to love each other forever, they intended to stay married; today if the couple bothers to marry at all, it is on a trial basis. Once a stranger could knock on an American's door for help in the middle of the night; today the American won't even answer the knock. Modern America has a crumbling morality and will lose all her world power and influence because of it.

In its colonial period, America was made of tough stuff. Its settlers risked the ocean, disease and the unknown to make homes in a wilderness. Now American people have no regard for their homes: they let garbage pile up and don't set goals further ahead than having a good time Saturday night. Risk to the modern American means possible death by cancer from cigarette smoking; risk means maybe not having a good time at the party; risk means buying a car that might turn out to be a lemon. Risk doesn't mean putting one's name of the line, standing for something in the face of opposition, and persisting in a cause. Other nations have no regard for wishy-washy Americans either. The Ayatollah Khomeini doesn't think Americans are tough. He doesn't think we take risks anymore. Anyone with an ounce of pride can see that we ought to take a stand. Either we leave those defenseless, American hostages to die; or we risk something and bomb Iran. Tehran thinks the American rock is crumbling.

Besides losing the ability to fight, Americans have lost the ability to love. The family was once a warm, comfort-giving womb into which each beseiged person could retreat to rest and nurture his resistance to the cold, cruel world. Today when a child comes home to find his mom, she isn't even there. She's off making money. When the child asks for help, his folks don't even know how to do modern math problems. When a child asks for a new ski jacket, his parents complain that it's too expensive. He is rejected, aborted from the womb, left to struggle helplessly like a premature infant doomed to die. If American youth isn't nursed to strength, they will be easy prey for Communism. In fact, Communist leaders are gleefully watching right now as the American rock is crumbling.

The husband and wife that ought to be making a loving home for the child are having their own troubles. Since they really only married on a trial basis, they don't mind separating if they can't always agree on things. If one wants to go to the movies, and the other wants to stay home and watch TV, they decide they're incompatible. The only reason most couples don't get divorced is that it's too expensive to support two households, and they can't decide who gets the waterbed and who gets the TV. Like the cookie crumbles, so America is crumbling.

Society isn't much better. I can't think of one good thing to say about it. How can it be when it's made of these unprincipled couples with a bunch of rejects for kids that even the parents don't want around. Joan Crawford abused her own daughter, and the late Robert Kennedy's son is a doper-alcoholic. I knew one guy whose parents changed the locks four times on the front door so he couldn't get in. He finally jumped off Golden Gate Bridge. Jesus said, "Knock and it shall be opened unto you." If this was a moral country based on the Bible's teaching, Americans would still open their doors when someone knocked. As it is, America's morality is getting so weak America can soon be knocked over with a feather. Right now, the dollar is worth only about twenty cents and every other country knocks our economy.

America used to have influence. America used to have answers to questions. What country in its right mind would ask America for advice now? We have welfare to pay off pimps and hookers; income tax laws with loopholes that benefit corrupt businessmen, and a government full of dishonest politicians who take bribes and bug their enemies' telephones. We even have an educational system that permits just anyone to go to school, even if the nerds can't spell! This is a fact: America is sitting on top of the crumbling morality and she's about to be dashed to pieces on the rocks below, and all her power and influence will be smashed to bits.

Anitra Dark
Ohlone College

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Pro and Con Essays

1. Choose a controversial topic.

2. Narrow the scope of your topic. For example, "College tuition" is too broad. "Tuition at Santa Monica College: Ten Dollars Per Unit" would be a better topic.

3. Use a title.

4. In your introductory paragraph introduce the topic; that is, simply identify the issue. You may want to present some neutral background information, but do not present any pro or con arguments.

5. Following your introductory paragraph present one side of the issue; presenting arguments in the order of increasing persuasiveness is effective.

6. Next, present the other side of the issue. Your task is toobe equally persuasive in your arguments for and your arguments against the proposition you have chosen.

7. Be sure to use transitional sentences as you move from one section of your essay to the next. For example, your first sentence might be, "Tuition of ten dollars per unit has been proposed at Santa Monica College." To introduce your pro arguments you might write, "Some people are in favor of tuition for Santa Monica College." In your transition from pro to

con arguments you might write, "Other people are opposed to tuition for Santa Monica College."

8. You may wish to present your own point of view in your concluding paragraph. I hope you will.

Claire O'Connell
Santa Monica College

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Any course in freshman composition must eventually involve Aristotle's fourth mode of exposition--which is argument.

I send my students on a scavenger hunt for fallacious arguments that flourish on editorial pages and in the speeches of politicians, and what they find can often be most useful in sorting out the levels of student sophistication. Consider, for instance, the twin arguments on the next page, under the heading "Bad Blood Over the Good News Bible."

An "F" student (if there is such a mark any more) will prefer one argument over the other, but not be able to explain why.

A "D" student won't like either argument, but won't be able to explain why.

A "C" student will prefer one argument because the other commits a number of fallacies in reasoning--loaded language, the strawman fallacy, argumentum ad hominem, and especially the spurious reductive ad absurdum.

A "B" student won't like either argument because they both commit all those fallacies.

An "A" student in logic will prefer one argument because he recognizes it as an ingenious parody of the other, and he will furthermore be able to demonstrate which argument it is that obeys the Biblical injunction to "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit."

And after listening to him, perhaps the other will become A students a well.

Jim Hines
Saddleback College

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After reading and discussing Maugham's "Rain" I offer students a chance to write the suicide letter the minister (Rev. Davidson) might have written.

The assignment is a bit contrived, since a suicide in Mr. Davidson's situation would not be likely to go into great detail. However, I have had interesting

changes of attitude (towards Mr. Davidson, the story in general and some aspects of life) and I consider the experience a valuable (if slightly ghoulish) one.

Writing on Rain

1. Assume the role of Reverend Mr. Davidson and write a letter that will explain carefully to the world why you are about to take your life. (Remember this is not a mere suicide note, but an attempt to communicate the truth as you see it.)

Dermot O'Dwyer
Allan Hancock College

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I. Logical Analysis

A Handout for Students Who Have Difficulty With Logical Analysis

To analyze something is to break it into its parts - a two-step process: (a) name the parts, (b) show relationship of one part to another and to the whole.

The lead or introductory statement names the thing, idea, or scene to be described and the number of parts.

* *

The middle of the paper describes the parts in order of importance--or in time or space order with links between them to show the connection of one part to another.

* *

The ending may comment on the usefulness of the object described or may emphasize the mood of the lead for a descriptive analysis of a scene or an idea.

> Rock and roll musicians are a strange group of people to understand, but there are three types that are easily recognized. First, the star of the band--he's usually the guitar player--is very easy to notice. He's the one jumping up and down while playing his guitar with his teeth. Then there's the drughead of the group. He's always bombed out on something, either acid or too many downs. He's the person who will play all night long and never once know what he's playing. And last but not least there's the serious writer of the group, whose writings are so bizarre that the only people who can understand them are the acidheads and the Erich Segal fans. But in the long run we do not need rock and roll musicians so people can see just how wild their imaginations could go if they would let them.

Uses of logical analysis: Scientific procedures depend on it, the sociologist, the psychologist, the political scientist all use it to organize their findings.

Some applications to your work as a student: (a) answering essay questions which

ask you to "analyze," "describe," "explain," "classify," "discuss," etc. (b) organizing your ideas fo oral and written reports, (c) selecting, classifying, and organizing material for research papers, (d) recognizing principles of organization in material that you read or listen to.

Mrs. Catherine Cline
Michell Community College
Statesville, NC

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News Item Analysis

1. Choose a narrow, specific news item.
2. Choose two publications which have reported on the news item you have selected.
3. Analyze the similarities and differences between the two articles. A good organizational scheme is as follows:
   First, presentation of facts both sources agree on;
   Second, analysis of how the different sources present different points of view;
   Third, the writer's (student's) personal conclusions which provide a good wrap-up for the news item analysis.
4. Refer to your sources specifically as often as necessary. (Examples: "According to the article in Time...." or "The Rolling Stone article presented several facts which....") Identify the author, if possible.
5. Use a title page. Follow the form on page 359 of The Portable English Handbook.
6. Write a bibliography. Follow the form on page 395 of The Portable English Handbook.
7. Use four footnotes, two for each source. Follow the form explained on pages 352-258 in The Portable English Handbook.

Claire O'Connell
Santa Monica College

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J. Inferential

With the help of a thought-provoking and diversified anthology (Fabrizio, et al., THE RHETORIC OF YES, Holt, Rinehart & Winston) I had my students read relatively brief passages in class on a daily basis, beginning with amusingly light selections (fables of James Thurber) and progressing gradually to more difficult material (Loren Eiseley, Germaine Greer, Jean-Paul Sartre, Ralph Waldo Emerson). After giving the students a few minutes to read the crucial passage I had assigned, I would ask them to write for a specified period of time (15-20 minutes) on specific questions having to do with comprehension and inferential

ability. This "burst" of writing would be followed by yet another reading from the same selection, and another written response, and so on until the highlights of the entire selection had been covered. Some authors would be examined in a day or two; others might require a week or more, but the basic premise behind this approach was intensive daily writing on questions of substance. My purpose in following this procedure was to break down psychological resistance to writing by generating a kind of dialogue between the students and the instructor, a dialogue that demanded (and received) genuinely thought-out responses to questions of considerable complexity and intellectual sophistication. The response was tremendously positive because the students felt actively involved in a process that led to tangible results, rather than feeling like passive recipients of the usual English lecture. Each day the papers would be collected, examined for clarity, coherence, etc., and returned to the students in a folder. One of the positive side effects of this procedure was that the writing indicated self-corrective tendencies: the more the students wrote, the better their grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc., became. Much of it, I suspect, had to do with self-confidence, genuine interest in the material covered, and increased motivation.

Although this system is not for everyone (it does require more effort on the part of the instructor, as well as the students), it has several obvious advantages, including a built-in guarantee that the assigned work will be completed, and that daily attendance will be very high, since the process is cumulative and work must be done in a classroom context. The greatest pleasure for me, personally, was being able to teach freshman composition by dealing with problems and issues that produced some fascinating responses on a daily basis. Instead of having to "perform" as an instructor, I had my students perform for me, and the results were rewarding and gratifying for all concerned. Class morale was high throughout the quarter, and the students approached each new assignment with anticipation and zest.

James Fetler
Foothill College

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I ask my students to read the Outlook (editorial) section of the Washington Post on a given Sunday. While the daily Post contains three editorials, the Outlook section contains a good eight pages of editorial material. I ask each student to respond to one editorial, either pro or con, in a paper of about 500 words. I have been hailed on the stairs a year or two later by a student who says, "I'm still reading the Outlook section!" The stimulation these particular pieces of reading provide elicits some of the best writing of the quarter--fluent, lively, and incidentally, more error-free.

Margaret Liu
Northern Virginia Community College
Alexandria, Virginia

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School Statistics in the United States

School year ended in	Population 5 to 17 yrs.	Pupils Enrolled	Male* Teachers	Female* Teachers	Average salary per Member#
1900	21,040,322	15,503,110	126,588	296,474	$325
1910	24,239,948	17,813,852	110,481	412,729	485
1920	27,728,788	21,578,316	95,654	593,648	871
1930	31,571,322	25,678,015	141,771	712,492	1420
1940	29,805,259	25,433,542	194,725	680,752	1441
1945	-	23,225,784	127,102	699,271	-
1950	30,788,000	25,111,427	194,968	718,703	3010
1960	43,881,000	36,086,771	392,700	962,300	5174
1962	45,380,000	38,253,000	436,575	1,021,389	5700
1964	48,000,500	41,025,000	489,800	1,070,200	6240

*Prior to 1954, includes other nonsupervisory instructional staff (librarians, guidance and psychological personnel.)

#Average annual salary per member of instructional staff.

Source: U.S. Office of Education; salaries cover supervisors, principals and teachers.

Above is a table of facts concerning the change in population of students, number of teachers, male and female, and average salary. Examine the figures carefully and draw at least five (5) conclusions concerning them. Write the conclusions in a sentence each.

Dave White
College of San Mateo

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Suppose you have been placed in charge of the only fall-out shelter in Hawaii on the day when an atomic bomb has destroyed life everywhere else in the world. The cloud of radioactive fall-out is approaching, and you must decide who can be allowed to enter the shelter. The shelter is provided with barely enough food, water, and air for yourself plus six other people. Ten people have shown up, requesting to be saved, but you cannot admit more than six without eliminating the change of survival for all other occupants. Remember these people will be the only survivors, and they must expect to spend four to five months in the shelter together.
WHOM WOULD YOU SELECT AND WHY?

A 50 year old scientist, male, in good health.
A 45 year old doctor, female, good health.
A 30 year old male musician, with instrument, good health.
A 35 year old master carpenter, male, divorced, spent time in prison for armed robbery.
A 25 year old prostitute and drug addict.
A 15 year old pregnant girl, very low IQ.
A 50 year old farmer, good health.

A 28 year old lawyer and his 24 year old wife, a school teacher, who cannot bear children. Neither will enter without the other.
A 25 year old nun.

Louise Hazelton
College of San Mateo

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Explanatory Essay Used to Explain Classification on Semantic Labels

Writing Assignment: "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest"

One of the main functions of these first two pages of Kesey's novel is to reveal the techniques of "hiding" used by its narrator, and perhaps others as well. Furthermore, the techniques of "hiding" are contrasted with an alternative kind of behavior. In order to focus upon these concerns, Kesey uses a series of word patterns and repeated situations designed to describe in detail the factors involved in both kinds of behavior. Write a paper which shows to the fullest extent you can the complete definition offered by Kesey in these pages of the term: "HIDING." You may include explanations of the causes of hiding, the techniques of hiding, and the consequences of both kinds of behavior contrasted here.

Please read these instructions carefully again, underline the multiple directions, and take care to follow them directly. Use, as always, the explanatory essay structure, and use as many paragraphs as your explanation requires.

For those of you who have not read the novel, I might offer a helpful hint or two. You are reading the words of an inmate of a mental hospital who is not really insane. His description of fact is influenced by his point-of-view in particular ways, but though he may not truthfully see the actual facts exactly as he describes them, he might be revealing their true "meaning" by the way he distorts his vision of them. Trust him, but recognize that you must "interpret" him in order to understand exactly what is going on.

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"The men are still standing and waiting to see what she was onto the black boys about, so she remembers seeing me and says, "And since it is Monday, boys, why don't we get a good head start on the week by shaving poor Mr. Bromden first this morning, before the after-breakfast rush on the shaving room, and see if we can't avoid some of the --ah--disturbance he tends to cause, don't you think?"

Before anybody can turn to look for me I duck back in the mop closet, jerk the door shut dark after me, hold my breath. Shaving before you get breakfast is the worst time. When you got something under your belt you're stronger and more wide awake, and the bastards who work for the Combine aren't so apt to slip one of their machines in on you in place of an electric shaver. But when you shave before breakfast like she has me do some mornings--six-thirty in the morning in a room all white walls and white basins, and long-tube-lights in the ceiling making sure there aren't any shadows, and faces all round you trapped screaming behind the mirrors--then what chance you got against one of their machines?

I hide in the mop closet and listen, my heart beating in the dark, and I try to get my thoughts off someplace else--try to think back and remember things about the village and the big Columbia River, think about ah one time Papa and me were hunting birds in a stand of cedar trees near The Dalles.... But like always when I try to place my thoughts in the past and hide there, the fear close at hand seeps in through the memory. I can feel that least black boy out there coming up the hall, smelling out for my fear. He opens out his nostrils like black funnels, his outsized head bobbing this way and that as he sniffs, and he sucks in fear from all over the ward. He's smelling me now, I can hear him snort. He don't know where I'm hid, but he's smelling and he's hunting around. I try to keep still....

(Papa tells me to keep still, tells me that the dog senses a bird somewheres right close. We borrowed a pointer dog from a man in The Dalles. All the village dogs are no-'count mongrels, Papa says, fish-gut eaters and no class a-tall; this here dog, he got insteek! I don't say anything, but I already see the bird up in a scrub cedar, hunched in a gray knot of feathers. Dog running in circles underneath, too much smell around him to point for sure. The bird safe as long as he keeps still. He's holding out pretty good, but the dog keeps sniffing and circling, louder and closer. Then the bird breaks, feathers springing, jumps out of the cedar into the birdshot from Papa's gun.)

The least black boy and one of the bigger ones catch me before I get ten steps out of the mop closet, and drag me back to the shaving room. I don't fight or make any noise. If you yell it's just tougher on you. I hold back the yelling. I hold back till they get to my temples. I'm not sure it's one of those substitute machines and not a shaver till it gets to my temples; then I can't hold back. It's not a will-power thing anymore when they get to my temples. It's a .... button, pushed, says Air Raid Air Raid, turns me on so loud it's like no sound, everybody yelling at me, hands over their ears from behind a glass wall, faces working around in talk circles but no sound from the mouths. My sound soaks up all other sound. They start the fog machine again and it's snowing down cold and white all over me like skim milk, so thick I might even be able to hide in it if they have a hold on me. I can't see six inches in front of me through the fog and the only thing I can hear over the wail I'm making is the Big Nurse whoop and charge up the hall while she crashes patients outta her way with that wicker bag. I hear her coming but I still can't hush my hollering. I holler till she gets there. They hold me down while she jams wicker bag and all into my mouth and shoves it down with a mop handle.

(A bluetick hound bays out there in the fog, running scared and lost because he can't see. No tracks on the ground but the ones he's making, and he sniffs in every direction with his cold red-rubber nose and picks up no scent but his own fear, fear burning down into him like steam.) It's gonna burn me just that way, finally telling about all this, about the hospital, and her, and the guys--and about McMurphy. I been silent so long now it's gonna roar out of me like floodgates and you think the guy telling this is ranting and raving my God; you think this is too horrible to have really happened, this is too awful to be the truth! But, please. It's still hard for me to have a clear mind thinking on it. But it's the truth even if it didn't happen.

Gordon Barrett
West Valley College

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"Confound it, men! If they don't respond to hard sell and they don't respond to soft sell, what the hell sell do they respond to?"

Write about a four page typed paper in which you show how advertising shapes our idealizations of ourselves and our environments, determines our values, needs, and actions or behavior, and even creates what we think of as culture. Perhaps the following questions will help you probe for details and examples and help you formulate a main idea. You may use any sort of advertising for research and as supporting examples in your papers, TV commercials, classified ads, magazine ads, billboards, radio blurbs, etc., etc. Naturally, you may also refer to the ones we saw in the Media Center and those in our text.

Does advertising aim at the truth, half-truth, deception, fraud?

What are the appeals: vanity, fear, snobbery, pride, loneliness, sex, masculinity, power, domestic bliss, etc.? To whom do the ads appeal?

What are some of the language techniques used by advertisers to effect their purposes?

- use of rhyme and rhythm
- words used for affective or connative values
- puffery
- ambiguity
- analogy
- symbolism (to imbue the object advertised with significance beyond itself)
- projection of consumer into role or identification with a group
- repetition of brand name
- "cool" language or colloquial accent or foreign accent

How do the pictorial images or graphics work?

What myths, what folklore, what rituals are expressed?

Mike Finnegan
Cherry Gundry
Orange Coast College

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This assignment uses information readily available to all students and tests their ability to draw logical conclusions and organize their thinking. The assignment can be completed in class or as a take home essay.

You are an archaeologist or historian living in the year three thousand, who has just discovered a document belonging to the long-ago-destroyed United States. (Use a dollar bill.) Though you can read the writing, at least the English, you know nothing about the American people or their culture other than what you can learn from the document itself. For instance, you cannot assume the document is used for money unless you find evidence on the bill itself proving this.

As a scientist making your report, what does this piece of paper tell you about the people who made it, about their culture and even perhaps about their nation? Since you can't cover everything in this short essay or report, limit your decision, organizing and developing your material in any way you choose.

All reports should be submitted in ink!

Judy Wilkinson
Skyline College

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LETTER-WRITING

Writing Realistic Application Letters and Data Sheets

I have found that students write better application letters and data sheets if they can be used to apply for a particular made-up job. The following things are done to create a realistic setting:

1. Students write and revise the letter and data sheet just as if they are applying for a job. A job opportunity is presented to the students and their letters are written to get a particular job.
2. The students study all of the letters and act as a committee to choose five of the best qualified student.
3. Two of the five students are chosen to go for the interview. The final choice is made by a group of three teachers who do not know the students.
4. The two students go for an interview that is videotaped so the class can study the interviews. The interview is conducted by a person from industry or from the school that is in personnel work. Most students go into the interview well prepared by trying to learn as much about the job requirements as they can.

Sue D. Holland
Florence-Darlington Technical College
Florence, South Carolina

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Developing a Sense of Audience

"Letters to the Editor" seem to do the trick while creating a lot of excitement when they get printed in our hometown local. And they do get printed. We begin by looking at samples from the editorial page and then students begin to write their own. Just about all of them have something that has frustrated them--a red light or stop sign dangerously arranged, the new civic center plans, city taxes, etc. Also, this assignment helps them feel the power of the written word. Many of them even get angry or approving phone calls.

Carolyn Christensen
Daytona Beach Community College
Daytona Beach, FL

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Letter Case #3, Business Communications

You are employed by the Eastman Kodak Company, 343 State Street, Rochester, New York 14650, where you work as a Photo Information Specialist in the Consumer Markets Division. The following letter was given to you for your reply:

February 25, 1970

Mr. George Eastman,
Eastman Kodak Co.,
Rochester, New York

My dear Mr. Eastman,

I am very fond of taking pictures, but my sister wanted her camera back. I remembered where my dear husband had left our Model E-3 and I took it out of the trunk.

When I asked the man in the store to put in some film, he told me that it was no longer available.

I find this hard to believe; when my husband and I purchased the camera in 1907, we were given a lifetime guarantee.

Therefore since I am still very much alive, please send me at once two rolls of size 118 film c.o.d.

Yours truly,

Mrs. J. Block
8840 Raejean Ave.,
San Diego, Calif.

The E-3, a moderately expensive folding camera, has not been made for over 60 years, and film size 118 is not available. It can't be made to order because stocks would on go out of date and there is no market for the size. The camera cannot be converted to take another size. Answer her letter; you have sufficient authority in your position to take any reasonable action. (The above letter was actually sent and Eastman replied; a copy of their answer will be given to you when the assignment is turned in.)

Jack Block
San Diego Mesa College

EASTMAN KODAK COMPANY

GENERAL OFFICES
343 STATE STREET

ROCHESTER, NEW YORK 14650

TELEPHONE
AREA CODE 716 325-2000

December 2, 19

Mr. Adele Block
8840 Raejean Avenue
San Diego, California 92123

Dear Mr. Block:

Thank you for your recent letter inquiring about the availability of size 118 film.

We certainly appreciate your concern over not being able to purchase this size film, especially since the camera is apparently capable of producing satisfactory results after all these years. I would like to point out, however, that the demand for this particular size diminished to a point where it was no longer practical for us to continue manufacturing it. We've always tried to supply our films in a wide variety of sizes and emulsions to take care of all reasonable needs. Only when the demand becomes so small that both production and stocking costs make its continuance in our line impractical do we consider dropping it from our listing. There was so little call for size 118 film that most dealers preferred not to stock it. Since it is not economical to manufacture a few rolls of any film, and find that it has gone out of date before being sold, it was decided to discontinue No. 118 film.

Although we know of no way in which your camera can be converted to use other film sizes nor do we have provisions for making trades or exchanges, there are a wide variety of Kodak cameras available which use the more popular film sizes. Information concerning them is enclosed for your interest and the cameras, like all of our photographic products, can be purchased through Kodak dealers in your area. As manufacturers, we distribute our products through dealers and have no provisions for handling direct orders.

I'm sorry we can't be of more direct assistance at this time but we would like to hear from you whenever you have questions or comments about Kodak products or services.

Sincerely,

KABoas

KABoas:PBP
Enc.
A-501,503,505,514
F-501,2

Photo Information
Consumer Markets Division

I had my students choose their favorite TV program; then I gave out to them the names of the program directors of ABC, NBC, and CBS stations. (One could get current directors by writing directly).

The students were to write letters telling why they did or did not like the particular program. They were to make specific suggestions regarding their likes, and if they had dislikes they were to tell how the program could be improved.

Prior to their writing the letters, we reviewed parts of a business letter and the correct format. We also read in class some of the more interesting ones. The students' letters were corrected, then re-written after being graded the first time. The re-written letters, with envelopes addressed, could be sent by the students if they chose. (If the instructor chose, the instructor could send them, but we had each student send his own).

I have also had special speakers and subsequent to their oral presentations, I would have the students write "Thank you" letters and send to the speaker. For those I sent all the letters as a group to the speaker, and I have found this to be very good public relations for a community college situation.

Marian Axford
Bakersfield Community College

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WRITING ABOUT POETRY

Each student composes an original poem on any subject in any form, with the understanding that all poems will be read by everyone. Each poem is accompanied by an essay in which we describe our motivation and anticipated satisfaction in writing about what we did in the way we did.

Each student selects a contemporary poem (first published within the last ten years) from a recent periodical, and includes an essay describing factors in the particular poem that mark it as contemporary. For instance, what aspects of subject matter, tone, style, technique, theme, etc., allow us to reasonably deduce that the poem was recently composed?

All student written and published poems are anthologized anonymously and read by everyone. Each student identifies the poems written by peers and those written by professional poets. Sometimes we compose an essay explaining how we can (usually) distinguish the "amateur" from the "professional" efforts. Other times we select the three "best" poems, writing an explanation of our preference and our criteria for judgment.

This exercise usually stimulates sustained student interest, and provides a

variety of writing experiences. Criteria are established for judging excellence in poetry. Insights are gained about why many of us find modern poetry difficult. Some students are encouraged to attempt more (and improved) poems.

Keeping the poems anonymous is sometimes a problem. All poems are identified as to author after the exercise. I usually include one of my recent poems in the anthology.

James D. Collins
College of the Siskiyous

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The writing task enclosed was appropriate to one particular first-semester English class (at El Camino, that's English 1A) and might not have been successful here or elsewhere at any other time.

The students have the Conscious Reader as a reader. We have discussed denotation and connotation. Read a few poems. Essentially, though, the course is concerned with expository writing and not especially literary commentary.

English 1A November 27, 1979
In-Class Essay. Purpose: Practice in Writing about Literature

After reading and re-reading "The Cat's View," explore the meaning(s) of the poem. Begin with a clear sentence identifying the work and your purpose(s). Here's a start, but don't feel that you must use it: "In her poem "The Cat's View," Virginia Terris is...."

Include your interpretation of the surface or denotative meaning (literal meaning) of the poem. Then explore such other levels of meaning as seem appropriate. You may quote, but limit quotations to one or two lines. Here are some questions you may wish to consider: What is the limit of the cat's life? Can the poem be applied to a being other than a cat? Why? How? Is a comparison or contrast being made? What is it?

In writing make use of condensed sentences. Check for coherence. Support your statements.

Proofread several times and with care. Double space.

Length: Whatever is sufficient to explain your interpretation of the poem. Somewhere around 300-500 words could be sufficient.

PLEASE RETURN YOUR COPY OF THE POEM.

THE CAT'S VIEW

The cat at dawn goes to the slightly raised window.
Puts her paws on the sill.
Looks through the crack to see what she can see.

Houses with blank windows
a car moving itself down a street
chimneys with no smoke in them
grass gray still with night
below her the water perfectly still
in it a cloud moving a gull
disappearing into a bulkhead
the sun rising against walls

This is all she will ever see.

At noon she goes to the window again.
The houses are as she has seen them
but their windows are open the curtains blowing
people walking along the street without speaking
a cat with a fat red tail
hunting mice hiding in the weeds
a tall sun leaning over grass and the sparrows

This too is all she will ever see.

Now the sun rests against the dark sides of the houses.
Sparrows gone into dark holes
and grass lying down
no people on streets
cars moving back emitting black smoke
the tide quite as morning
gulls flying back but the clouds chasing the sun
the bones of the house and the sky and the water
lying still

This too is all she will ever see.

Virginia R. Terris

Marvyl Doyle
El Camino College

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WRITING ABOUT THE SHORT STORY

In a "Fundamentals of English" course, the students, after reading a series of short stories, were directed to show the application of the "moral" of one of the stories to that of a currect newspaper article. The finished product was a typed, two or three paragraph formal paper, with bibliography.

Because the exercise incorporated paper, with bibliography, research, editing, proofreading and presentation, it was particularly valuable for students required to produce formal papers for other academic courses.

F. V. Stollenwerk
Grossmont College

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This idea originated with Pat Lawhorn, a colleague of mine. After completing discussion and analysis of a group of short stories, the instructor chooses one character from any of the short stories studied and asks the students to select a wife (or husband) for this character. The wife or husband must be a character from any short stories (including the story in which the selected character is found) studied. Once the selection of a mate has been made, the student must justify his or her choice in terms of what he/she knows about the characters. Specific reference to the story(ies) is absolutely necessary in order to support one's position.

Mary Hart
Keystone Jr. College
La Plume, PA

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Assignment: Of all the short stories in our anthology, which do you think is the most depressing? Remember that this assignment involves a definition of what you feel depressing means.

This assignment is an answer to the students' eternal question: "Why do we have to read so many depressing stories?" My colleagues have individual answers to the question but all regard it as an irritating example of the students' lack of perception. I feel that in general we should take students' responses seriously, especially those that come from their emotions. By not trying to avoid the charge of "depressing" but rather going deeper into it, we show the students that we are honestly concerned with their reactions, and at the same time force them deeper into the stories and their own reactions. For instance, a general discussion of the question would quickly show that in some works of literature the death of a main character is not in fact depressing. Why? In another story, the mere social embarrassment of a character is terribly painful. Why? Once students notice disagreement or rather differences in their reactions to this question, they must begin to examine their own responses, to consider why they happen to find Story X more depressing than anyone else in the class, or why they do find Story Y as depressing as their friends do. I find this an excellent assignment for those unsophisticated students who do not usually react to literature.

Mark Hakins
Foothill College

WRITING FOR PUBLICATION

Writing for publication carries a built-in incentive. The writing teacher can provide information on essay contests or other outlets for free-lance writing. For instance, the local newspaper often welcomes feature pieces. The teacher should try to publish a magazine containing student material where students have a chance to compare their work with that of their peers.

Carole Bencich
Cocoa, Florida

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WRITING AN INTERVIEW

Interviewing a Famous Personality

Your assignment during this class hour is to interview one of your classmates. Like all of us, he or she is famous for something done or said somewhere, sometime. The famous deed may have been a silly remark that had embarrassing consequences, or it may have been some rather daring and unforgettable stunt that has earned someone a nickname or that is still talked about by family and friends. That's what makes this classmate a famous person, and that's why you are going to interview him--to tell the world that this famous deed was and what the person behind it is really like.

How will you get started? Simple: after you find out whom you are to interview, you and your partner get off somewhere together where you can talk and relax for a conversation. Go get a couple of cups of coffee or a sandwich or something; find a comfortable place to sit down together. Then take turns playing interviewer and interviewee. Give each other about 20 minutes in each role. Find out all about one another. Here are some categories you may want to investigate--but ask about others, too; those are up to you.

background family hobbies strongly held ideas opinions

education MOST FAMOUS DEED goals jobs courses

This is not an exhaustive list of categories--show some creativity and get some of your own. Take notes during your interview; you'll write the essay-interview to turn in later. That essay should be an essay, in paragraph and sentence form, not interview form. Make it like a magazine article. Try to make it interesting, insightful, revealing, and thorough. DON'T start the thing off with the usual

"Sally Student was born in 1971 in Dallas, Texas...." Find some way to organize your material and make the content and writing some more than mere routine biography. Sound tough? Could be!

Bob Dees
Orange Coast College

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WRITING THE SURVEY AND SUMMARY

The survey:
Assignment: Choose a subject in which you are interested.
Write a questionnaire and check with instructor.
Interview 30 individuals you do not know.
Study responses.
Write a 800-1000 word paper based on the information received.

INTRO: Purpose, background of subject, methodology. Charts, graphs, etc., expected.
BODY: Materials gathered and summary.
CONCLUSION: Tie it up in a neat, little package with your evaluation of materials.
(Include all survey materials in appendix.)

Subjects re survey move from religion to sexual mores.

Edward F. Sundberg
Cabrillo College

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Writing a Precis

Definition: The French term "precis" (pronounced pray-ses) means "a pruned or cut-down statement." It is an abstract or summary of a selection.

"You take your material," to quote one writer, "and boil it down so as to get rid of all the parts that do not really matter; you then collect what is left and put these points or random ideas. It must be the same information, told clearly and readably in a very much condensed form."

How to Write a Precis:

(1) Slowly read the selection you are going to summarize. Do not skim.
(2) Read the selection again separating essential points from detail.
(3) With notes or the equivalent in your mind, construct a few sentences giving the substance or meaning of the selection.
(4) Read it again making sure you have omitted nothing important. Strike out unnecessary words, revise and copy your composition.

Notes:

(1) Use your own words. You may have to use a key word in the selection, but you are not to copy whole phrases or sentences from the original.
(2) Keep the logical order of the original selection. Do not rearrange the thoughts or facts.
(3) Brevity - Omit particular details or replace them with a general statement. Illustrations and quotations should be omitted. Adjectives and other descriptive words generally should be omitted.
(4) The precis should be approximately 1/4 to 1/3 the length of the original. Indicate your word count at the bottom of your precis (count all words).
(5) Coherence: the precis is not a list of disconnected words or phrases. It is a smoothly written miniature essay. Connective words as however, moreover, therefore, again, also, and, finally must be used.

Gary W. Longrie
Milwaukee Area Technical College
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

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FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY.

1. Read the following selection by Alfred Kazin.
2. Indicate the number of times that you had to read the selection before understanding it. Two or three readings may be necessary.
3. Write a one-paragraph summary of "The Word Was My Agony."
4. Include a topic sentence which specifically states the thesis of the passage.
5. Limit your paragraph to 175-200 words.

"The Word Was My Agony" - Alfred Kazin

I was awed by this system, I believed in it, I respected its force. The alternative was "going bad." The school was notoriously the toughest in our tough neighborhood, and the dangers of "going bad" were constantly impressed upon me at home and in school in dark whispers of the "reform school" and in examples of boys who had been picked up for petty thievery, rape, or flinging a heavy inkwell straight into a teacher's face. Behind any failure in school yawned the great abyss of a criminal career. Every refractory attitude doomed you with the sound "Sing Sing." Anything less than absolute perfection in school always suggested to my mind that I might fall out of the daily race, be kept

back in the working class forever, or--dared I think of it?--fall into the criminal class itself.

I worked on a hairline between triumph and catastrophe. Why the odds should always have felt so narrow I understood only when I realized how little my parents thought of their own lives. It was not for myself alone that I was expected to shine, but for them--to redeem the constant anxiety of their existence. I was the first American child, their offering to the strange new God; I was to be the monument of their libration from the shame of being--what they were. And that there was shame in this was a fact that everyone seemed to believe as a matter of course. It was in the gleeful discounting of themselves--what do we know?--with which our parents greeted every fresh victory in our savage competition for "high average," for prizes, for a few condescending words of official praise from the principal at assembly. It was in the sickening invocation of "Americanism"--the word itself accusing us of everything we apparently were not. Our families and teachers seemed tacitly agreed that we were somehow to be a little ashamed of what we were. Yet it was always hard to say why this should be so. It was certainly not--in Brownsville!--because we were Jews, or simply because we spoke another language at home, or were absent on our holy days. It was rather that a "refined," "correct," "nice" English was required of us at school that we did not naturally speak, and that our teachers could never be quite sure we would keep. This English was peculiarly the ladder of advancement. Every future young lawyer was known by it. Even the Communists and Socialists on Pitkin Avenue spoke it. It was bright and clean and polished. We were expected to show it off like a new pair of shoes. When the teacher sharply called a question out, then your name, you were expected to leap up, face the class, and eject those new words fluently off the tongue.

There was my secret ordeal: I could never say anything except in the most roundabout way; I was a stammerer. Although I knew all those new words from my private reading--I read walking in the street, to and from the Children's Library on Stone Avenue; on the fire escape and the roof; at every meal when they would let me; read even when I dressed in the morning, propping my book up against the drawers of the bureau as I pulled on my long black stockings--I could never seem to get the easiest words out with the right dispatch, and would often miserably signal from my desk that I did not know the answer rather than get up to stumble and fall and crash on every word. If, angry at always being put down as lazy or stpid, I did get up to speak, the black wooden floor would roll away under my feet, the teacher would frown at me in amazement, and in unbearable loneliness I would hear behind me the groans and laughter: tuh-tuh-tuh-tuh.

The word was my agony. The word that for others was so effortless and so neutral, so unburdened, so simple, so exact, I had to mediate in advance, to see if I could make it, like a plumber fitting together odd lengths and shapes of pipe. I was always preparing words I could speak, storing them away, choosing between them. And often, when the word did come from my mouth in its great and terrible birth, quailing and bleeding as if forced through a thornbush, I would not be able to look the others in the face, and would walk out in the silence, the infinitely echoing silence behind my back, to say it all cleanly back to myself as I walked in the streets. Only when I was alone in the open air, pacing the roof with pebbles in my mouth, as I had read Demosthenes had done to cure himself of stammering; or in the street, where all words seemed

to flow from the length of my stride and the color of the houses as I remembered the perfect tranquility of a phrase in Beethoven's Romance in F I could sing back to myself as I walked--only then was it possible for me to speak without the infinite premeditation and strangled silences I toiled through whenever I got up at school to respond with the expected, the exact answer.

It troubled me that I could speak in the fullness of my own voice only when I was alone on the streets, walking about. There was something unnatural about it; unbearably isolated. I was not like the others! I was not like the others! At midday, every shocking Monday noon, they sent me away to a speech clinic in a school in East New York, where I sat in a circle of lispers and cleft palates and foreign accents holding a mirror before my lips and rolling difficult sounds over and over. To be sent there in the full light of the opening week, when everyone else was at school or going about his business, made me feel as if I had been expelled from the great normal body of humanity. I would gobble down my lunch on my way to the speech clinic and rush back to the school in time to make up for the classes I had lost. One day, one unforgettable dread day, I stopped to catch my breath on a corner of Sutter Avenue, near the wholesale fruit markets, where an old drugstore rose up over a great flight of steps. In the window were dusty urns of colored water floating off iron chains; cardboard placards advertising hairnets, EX-LAX; a great illustrated medical chart headed THE HUMAN FACTORY, which showed the exact course a mouthful of food follows as it falls from chamber to chamber of the body. I hadn't meant to stop there at all, only to catch my breath; but I so hated the speech clinic that I thought I would delay my arrival for a few minutes by eating my lunch on the steps.

When I took the sandwich out of my bag, two bitterly hard pieces of hard salami slipped out of my hand and fell through a grate onto a hill of dust below the steps. I remember how sickenly vivid an odd thread of hair looked on the salami, as if my lunch were turning stiff with death. The factory whistles called their short, sharp blasts stark through the middle of noon, beating at me where I sat outside the city's magnetic circle. I had never known, I knew instantly I would never in my heart again submit to, such wild passive despair as I felt at that moment, sitting on the steps before THE HUMAN FACTORY, where little robots gathered and shoveled the food from chamber to chamber of the body. They had put me out into the streets, I thought to myself; with their mirrors and their everlasting pulling at me to imitate their effortless bright speech and their stupefaction that a boy could stammer and stumble on every other English word he carried in his head, they had put me out into the streets, had left me high and dry on the steps of that drugstore staring at the remains of my lunch turning black and grimy in the dust.

Helen McCarthy
Santa Barbara City College

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WRITING ESSAY EXAMS

Final Writing Assignment

Write a one-page evaluation of the course and your writing. This is to be typed, as usual, but placed in the front of the theme notebook you are to hand in on the last day of classes. ALL writing done during the semester is to be in this folder, as documentation of the writing achievements you describe.

The first paragraph of this final paper should identify the rhetorical ideas presented in the course that you have found to be most helpful in writing papers. (It is not to be a summary of the course. If everything taught in the course has been entirely new to you, select no more than two or three concepts for comment.)

The rest of this paper should describe the progress you have made in writing during the course of the semester. Before writing this, of course, you will need to reread your papers carefully, noting comments and making sure that you have made all corrections. What are your most significant gains? Where do you need more work or practice? How do you plan to continue to work on your writing?

At the end of your paper, which is really an "Introduction" to your theme folder, copy the following statement, filling in the blanks as you see fit:

On the basis of the above evaluation and the writing in this notebook,

I believe that I deserve credit in English ____ with a grade of _____.

Signed:_____

Betty Pex
College of San Mateo

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Final Exam Idea

Enumerate and paste up 4 (?) Schultz cartoons on 8 1/2 x 11 sheet, e.g., 4 tiny tots playing football atop a bed, 2 playing hockey on a frozen bird-bath, etc. Make thermal master and reproduce.

Use one or more of these cartoons to help you select a subject. (You need not limit your subject to just what you see; you may use any subject the cartoons suggest to you.) Develop the idea into a finished paper. You determine its length. At the top of your paper (1) identify cartoon/s used, (2) tell what you attempted with the paper, (3) identify your audience, (4) entitle your paper.

At Western Iowa Tech Community College, Sioux City, IA, we are required to

give final tests. I use this to meet the "testing" (2-hr.) requirement. However, I treat it as any finished paper in my evaluation. Students like the "lightness" and appreciate being relieved of selecting a subject completely on their own.

Juanita D. Cook
Western Iowa Tech Community College
Sioux City, IA

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I met with a group of students who were about to take their first essay exam in history. We discussed two sample answers, a good one and a poor one, in terms of organization. We looked at several old exams for the course and identified three types of questions the instructor favored. The students then looked over their course notes, predicted answers, and wrote answers to these questions.

Audrey Edwards
Frostburg State College
Frostburg, MD

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WRITING THE RESEARCH PAPER

I regularly assign a problem-solution paper in my freshman composition classes. The student must find a problem in the community and research it in both the library and the real world. To do their primary research, the students must interview people who are involved with the problem or the solution. Ultimately, the objective is to write a paper which documents the primary and secondary sources used. Students enthusiastically go into the community and become very involved while researching topics such as pet over-population, child abuse, alcoholism, cruising, prostitution, and other local probems that are interesting to them. I do this to get students involved in the composition they are writing and to force them to become aware of problems in their community.

Robert E. Mehaffy
American River College

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I tried restricting the required term paper into a topic dealing with Colonial America, roughly 1600-1800, figuring that students could use the slight exposure to American history. In some cases the students got quite heavily involved and developed an intense interest in history. Others got heavily involved because it gave them a chance to explore a favorite subject without getting involved in the study of history. I got some interesting papers on medical technology, feminists, sexual attitudes, nutrition, patriotic music, scientific pursuits, bribery, political scandal. The range and diversity of subjects were fascinating, and the reading was often good. The ease of finding numerous source materials in our library made the problem a bit easier for the students and gave them a chance to get better acquainted with our own facilities and library staff. Naturally, there were bad papers, too, but I think there were far fewer bad ones under these circumstances, perhaps because even the dullest student can find some interest in some aspect of history.

John Hurley
Santa Ana College

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Select one of the sections in THE ESSENTIAL PROSE: "The Historical Dimension," "The Order of Nature," or "The Order of Art" as the basis for your research paper.

Adopt early so that you will be able to get through the prescribed assignment with ease if you stick close to the date-lines. When you think you need help, please do not hesitate to ask or to make an appointment. Often talking a few minutes can cut through what may seem insurmountable.

Your paper of 1500-2000 words should include

- a clearly stated point of view which you have developed from reading the essays
- a summary of each of one of the two main viewpoints regarding your subject
- a choice of one of the two perspectives you favored and found most attractive and a developed why you found it attractive
- biographical material about one of the authors
- a definition of art or nature or history, whichever is relevant to your paper
- several general statements about what the other essayists in the section discussed and how they furthered the discussion and validated the title of the section;
- proper footnoting and a bibliography (always be mindful that a model research paper is in PERRINE, 432ff).

Your bibliography should include in addition to the essays listed in your section on the following sources:

- a biographical reference for one of the authors in the section you have read from ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES or from one of the other special references listed on 403 ff. in PERRINE
- a definition of art or nature or history from THE OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY

an article either related to your paper from a journal or magazine or an article by one of the authors in your section that you found by consulting THE READERS' GUIDE TO PERIODICAL LITERATURE
one other source located from the BRD, the card catalogue, the pamphlet file, or another significant reference source.

* * * *

1. Topic sentence: November 17
   Library orientation: November 17; Library Reference Room: November 19
   Bring PERRINE to class week of November 22
   Read PERRINE, 415-428, 448-454 for November 19
   Read PERRINE, 394-414 for November 22
2. Thesis sentence: November 29
3. Outline: December 13
4. Final paper (including all 4 steps in addition to note cards, bibliography cards, rough draft. Paper will be unacceptable without this additional material.): December 17 or January 3

* * * *

Remember that for Wednesday you were asked to write a paragraph summary. Include in the paragraph the authors' names and the titles of the essays you might refer to properly puncutated. (PERRINE, 417-18, 411-13, will be helpful.)

Mimi Riordan
City College of San Francisco

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Assignment: Find me an article relevant to "energy" and analyze it as follows:

a. Indicate subject and controlling idea.
b. Formulate a thesis statement based on (a).
c. Extract the major ideas and summarize these. If they are presented as "advantages" and "disadvantages," place the ideas in these two categories.
d. State method or methods used in the opening paragraph.
e. Select a few other paragraphs to analyze for method of paragraph development (see text)*
f. Evaluate the article for significance of content and clarity of presentation.
g. Add ideas of your own, if you have some on the subject.
h. Attach a copy of the article (original or xerox copy).

Not exactly a "writing task," this assignment (and I called it an "assignment," not a "paper") has a two-fold purpose:
(1) To review basics of "thesis statement" and of "methods of paragraph development.
and (2) To prepare for the research or library paper.
(Since students have a tendency to resort to the cut-and-paste appproach to "research" papers, a salutary device is a limited and structured assignment that requires the finding of an article (selection), followed by the extraction and organization of the ideas in it.)

*Methods of paragraph development: (1) provocative questions (2) stressing

importance of the subject (3) quotation-authority (4) anecdote (5) supporting detail (6) illustrations or examples (7) definition or explanation pf terms or concepts (8) analysis of a problem (9) conclusion (10) recommendation, etc.

Lily Hearn
San Bernardino Valley College

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Research Paper (1000-1500 Words)

ASSIGNMENT: Write a biographical sketch of Baldwin, Didion, Orwell or St. Exupery which could serve as a "Preface" to a collection of his or her Complete Works.

The purpose of the biographical sketch will be to give the reader basic background information as an introduction to the writings of the author. You are to assume that the reader of The Collected Works of... knows nothing about the author you have chosen.

The writing of the paper will involve basic research in the library. Your paper will be required to have a bibliography of works consulted and footnotes. Later in the semester I will explain more fully the bibliography and the footnotes.

Today's assignment is to do preliminary work in the library by learning where you can find information about the writers. You will be given a handout which you are to try to complete during the hour and which you are to bring to class Monday.

If you have any questions about where to look or about what material is available, ask the reference librarian. She will be glad to help you.

This research paper cannot be done overnight. Therefore, it is important that you begin now and work gradually towards gathering the necessary information. We will be discussing the paper in class and I will try to meet with each of you at least once to check out how your work is progressing.

Library Assignment

The purpose of the following exercises is to familiarize you with those resources in MPC's library which will be helpful to you in seeking material for your research paper. By writing in the information asked for, you will be learning where you can find information about Baldwin, Didion, Orwell and St. Exupery. This will save you a good deal of time when you actually do begin to look for material, after you have selected the author about whom you want to write.

Bring these sheets with you to class on Monday.

******

I. CARD CATALOGUE

Using the card catalogue, provide the following information:

A. For JAMES BALDWIN

The titles of of	titles	Place of publication	dates of publication	call numbers
a novel				
a play				
a collection of essays other than The Fire Next Time				
one book written about Baldwin-- include the author.				

B. for JOAN DIDION
the titles of her books in the MPC Library:

the number of books in the Library written about her:_____

C. for GEORGE ORWELL
the title of one novel:
the title of one fairy story:
the authors, titles and call numbers of three books written about Orwell:

D. for ST. EXUPERY
the titles of three books by or about him (include call numbers):

II. ENCYCLOPEDIA: Of the three major encyclopedia in the Library, which one contains articles: on Baldwin/on Didion/on Orwell/on St. Exupery?
Collier's Encyclopedia
Encyclopedia Americana
Encyclopedia Britannica

III. READER'S GUIDE TO PERIODICAL LITERATURE (Index Table)
A. List the last work by Joan Didion published in a periodical:

title	Magazine	Volume Number/date	pages

B. Which edition of Reader's Guide did you use?

C. Does the Library suscribe to the magazine in which Didion's work appeared? How do you know?

IV. REFERENCE BOOKS.
Are there any references to the four writers in the following publications?

Reference book	Baldwin	Didion	Orwell	St. Exupery
Contemporary Authors (Ref. PN 841)				
Contemporary Literary Criticism (Ref. PN 771 C59)				
Current Biography (Ref CT 100 C8)				
Contemporary Novelists (Ref PR 737 Y5)				
A Library of Literary Criticism (Ref PN 771 K86)				
Women's Studies Abstracts (on index table)				

Elliot Roberts
Monterey Peninsula College

- -

The I-Search Paper (adapted from Ken Macrorie)

Allow something to choose you, something you want to know or possess, intensely. Maybe it's a stereo tape or record player that is right for your desires and pocketbook. Maybe it's a motorcycle. Or the name of a college or graduate school best for your needs. Or a spot in the United States or a foreign country where you would most enjoy working or visiting this summer. Or the authoritative answer to a question about yourself or someone you know--like what diet would help you be healthy (as you live with your body in this climate doing your things) or help you regain health.

These are only a few suggestions to give you the notion that for a change you're being asked to investigate something you're interested in rather than something the teacher feels would be good for you to pursue.

Walk around for a couple of days, letting yourself think of this matter. When you climb in bed just before you climb out in the morning, allow your mind to receive possible topics.

The Interview Stage

Now go after this topic--search. Find other persons who are interested in this topic. Ask them where to find the most useful books, magazines, newspapers, films, tapes, or whatever, on this topic. And who in your community or region knows the most about it. Look at or listen to this information and these ideas. Then think about interviewing persons who know a lot about the topic. What would be the best way to approach them? Through another person who knows them? Directly, by telephone or letter? Find out what their lives are like. When would they be most apt to have time and inclination to talk to you? Do you need an introduction of some sort from others?

If you are largely ignorant of the topic or object you are going to ask them

about, they may resent your taking up their time; and surely they will get little themselves from an exchange with you. So know something of the object before you talk to them. And whatever you do, don't approach them in this way: "I'm sorry to bother you. I know you're a very busy person, and don't have time to talk to ignorant people like me..." If that's true, why are you talking to them? Put yourself in their place. How would you like to be approached by a novice if you were an expert or authority on something? People like that are usually busy or they wouldn't have become experts and authorities. Often they enjoy helping others because they then get a chance to talk about what they love, but they don't like to waste time.

If you're worried that an expert may not want to give you much time, begin by asking her/him where you might best look for information and advice about your topic. Then if she/he does not want to talk at length with you, or hasn't time, she/he can refer you to another source or expert.

Talk to several experts. What if they disagree? Of if what they say differs from what others have said in books, magazines, newspapers, etc.?

Test their statements against those of other experts. Actually, we all are constantly evaluating experts. We try to find out how right they have been in the past. If we're asking Johnny how to build a tree-house, we do so because we've heard he was the principal builder of the one in the lot next-door. We ask the other boys and girls if he's good at it. What's his reputation? You can do the same in your I-Search. Consider whether the expert is rated highly by his peers. Does he publish in reputable publications? What company or institution does he work for? Does one thing he says seem to uphold another thing he says? Use your common sense.

Use both first-hand sources (people who talk to you who are doing what you want to do, or objects and events that you observe on your own) and second-hand sources (people whose observations you have to utilize because they were there and you weren't). Remember that an expert is one who knows a lot about something. He or she need not hold an official position or be a certain age. Your roommate may be the best authority on skiing in your region.

The Library Stage

After you have interviewed some experts in the area you are I-Searching, it is time to go to the library. Look for information in the card catalog, the Guide to Periodical Literature, other references suggested by Mrs. Eisenberg, the Reference Librarian. Also speak to her in case you need help. Make sure you look over the material suggested by the people you have interviewed. They are the ones who know what's currently been written in your area.

Writing the I-Search Paper

In your introduction, which may be about 1-1 1/2 pages, you should tell the reader what you knew and didn't know about your topic when you started. You should also make it clear why you are writing this paper, here you will show that the search may make a difference in your life.

In the body of the paper, you will tell the story of the hunt. But be careful. You don't need to tell everything (that you got a drink at the park fountain or

a stomach ache at Tony's Cafe on your journey--unless food and drink are your topics). The happenings and facts crucial to your hunt--they should appear in your report.

In the conclusion, you will tell what you learned or didn't learn. A search that failed can be as exciting and valuable as one that succeeded.

Your language and style should belong to you. As you think of your search and your topic, maybe you feel formal or informal--makes no difference. Write the way that seems natural, as long as you don't write in English, the word-wasting, feel-nothing, say-nothing, pretentious dialect that so many people in school bore each other with.

Documentation

The purpose of footnotes and bibliographies is to help readers assess the reliability of a search, and to show them when the writer is speaking and when his/her sources are doing the thinking or saying.

In documenting your paper, use the handout available in the library. It provides information about how to write footnotes and bibliography entries for books, magazines, newspapers, and interviews. Note the books in the bibliography are arranged alphabetically by the author's last name or by the title if not author is given.

Anne L. Legge
Lord Fairfax Community College
Middletown, Virginia

- -

Purpose: 1) To get students to be acquainted with library research--what's there, and how and were to find information.
2) Whet their curiosity about history.

How: We spent at least two class periods in the library. I explained where resources are and how to find information and helped individuals who hadn't used the library before.

Research paper assignment:

Everyone's familiar with the general theory of astrology, i.e., that the position of the stars and planets at the time of one's birth affects the kind of person he is. You're a Scorpio! Hard to get along with, private, intense, passionate. I'm an Aries--creative, enthusiastic, gentle. And so on.

The underlying assumption of this paper assignment is that world events and people's expectations at the time of your birth formed a kind of "astrology" that influenced the kind of person you are. You may rightly question the validity of this assumption, but for the sake of drama and perhaps humor, accept it. Allow yourself to believe it. Savor it. Let the detective in you explore history at the time of your birth, and let the creative dramatist/dreamer in

you draw the many possible connections between the way the world was when you were born and the way you are now.

In other words, you're Alex Haley, less driven, perhaps more fanciful, doing the first chapter or two of your own roots. While you're serious, you're also a bit more relaxed. You feel freer to blend fiction with fact. You might sketch a point or two, or make some rather dubious casual relationship. You want to present the "truth," but you also want to be dramatic. After all, isn't everyone unique? Don't we all deserve center stage once in a while?

But your exaggeration or padding should be based on at least a kernel of historical truth. So a major part of this paper will be researching what happened at the time leading up to, on the day of, and following your birth. Your resources should include reference books, newspapers, magazines, and a good dictionary or book of names.

1) Possible reference books:

Fact on File	What happened in the year you were born?
The Alamanac of Dates	On the day you were born?
The TimeTables of History	What other famous people were born the same day you were?
The People's Chronology	
Chronology of World History	

2) Newspapers: the local newspaper or the city where you were born, plus The San Francisco Chronicle, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal. What were the major headlines, events, horoscope, weather report, prophetic comics or cartoons of that famous day in history when you were born?

3) Magazines: Time, Newsweek, Life, The Saturday Evening Post, The Atlantic Monthly, The Progressive, The New Republic, The New Yorker, Seventeen, Redbook, etc.
   What were the major issues being discussed?
   What were the popular songs, movies, music, clothes styles, commonly advertised products, latest innovations in technology?
   Who were the movie stars or politicians in the spotlight?

4) Book of Names and their meaning:
   What's the meaning of your name--first, middle, and last.
   What or who did it come from?
   Were you named after someone? What was that person like? What of your personality have you inherited from that person?

5) Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature
   Take one or more of the dominant traits of your personality or one of your principal interests and research what someone wrote about it in a magazine article written the year of your birth. Find this article in the Reader's Guide.

Part of the research should, if possible, include interviews with family or family friends who saw you in the first few days or weeks of your life. Perhaps they have some warm or humorous or somehow pertinent memories. Maybe their recollection could be integrated into your depiction of the sense of amazement and promise and hope surrounding your memorable birth.

Don't hesitate to incorporate the bizarre, the apparently insignificant or unconnected event or detail that you can deftly show is truly connected and most significant.

By Wednesday, January 9, I want you to bring to class at least six 3 by 5 cards containing relevant information from at least six different sources. At least one source should be a magazine, one a newspaper, and one a book. The source should be written in footnote form.

The paper should be a minimum of 3 pages. I'd prefer it typewritten. Have fun with this assignment. This is your time to toot your own horn or to making loving fun of your assignment. Make your paper lively with your enthusiasm, sense of discovery, and creative imagination. The paper is due Monday, January 14.

Daniel Onorato
Modesto Junior College

- -

Success is relative, but for years I have despaired over finding a good research topic that is appropriate for college freshmen and interesting for the instructor. I've tried "a topic of your choice," "a contemporary social problem," "a current political issue," etc., and they have all been duds. Invariably the students choose too broad a topic, a topic that has been written to death (air pollution), or worse, a topic on which commercial sources abound.

However, most of my students attend the movies somewhat regularly. Using this built-in interest, I constructed a research problem even my less-than-average student can deal with successfully. The assignment acquaints them with library resources and the techniques of independent study and research. And the result is a well-structured six to ten page paper, complete with bibliography and footnotes.

The research paper is based on the reviews of a recently released motion picture. (Each semester I change the inclusive dates to provide a new crop of films.) The basic question the student answers in this paper is "How did the critics receive this particular film?"

Inasmuch as most libraries carry all the periodicals indexed in the Reader's Guide, finding several reviews is rarely a problem. I also require two daily newspaper reviews (generally, the Los Angeles Times and New York Times), both of which are available on microfilm. And the more enterprising students will search out less accessible sources. If students enhance their own critical faculties as a result of reading several reviews, that's an added plus.

John Dowden
Cerritos College

- -

COMBINATION WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Requirement - Essay - Approximately 500 words - Double spaced, one side of paper, unfolded.

Assignment - 1) To work on mechanical and grammatical problems.
2) To use concrete details to increase reader interest.
3) To set early, clear direction in the paper.

Write an essay on one of the following topics:

1) Write a description of a person or a place. Organize the descriptive details to support an abstraction which adequately summarizes your feelings.

Examples: 1) Laundromat - Noisy, hectic, boring
2) Library - Quiet
3) Bus station - Busy
4) Grocery store checker - Grouchy

2) Write an essay about a stereotype - Define a current stereotype or clarify your attitude toward one or attack one.

Examples: 1) Housewives - Not lazy TV watchers
2) Mexicans are not like the Frito Bandito
3) English teachers
4) Truck drivers

3) Write an essay in which you define an abstraction in concrete, specific ways, Use examples:

Examples: 1)

Patriotism	Hatred
Loyalty	Democracy
Love	Beauty
Greed	Boredom
Hypocrisy	Disgust

Robert Mognis
Modesto Junior College

- -

I had assigned Whitman's "When I Heard the Learned Astronomer" to be read. In class, I used the poem to explain the difference between vicarious and direct experience, and had the students suggest specific examples of each from their own experience. When I felt they understood the difference, I wrote on the board, "The basic difference between a direct and vicarious experience is that ....." I then divided the class into groups of five or six students each and asked them to complete the sentence in as clear, concise and correct a manner as possible, without using the words "direct," "vicarious," or

"experience," and to write their completions on the board.

They worked for about fifteen minutes; their entries included the following:

a) "...which is done by myself and that which is learned through others"
b) "...the former is your own personal feelings and the latter's someone else's."
c) "...the former involves more physical involvement and the latter more mental involvement."

Then, as a class, we grappled with the phrasing and came up with"...the former is done by oneself while the latter is learned or through others."

In the fifty-minute class, we had struggled with such problems, as diction, parallelism, punctuation, omission, directness, pronoun reference, and fragments, without once mentioning these terms. I feel that, as a result, the students had learned a little more about writing.

Bruce Brown
El Camino College

- -

(Two fifty minute periods, 2nd week of course)

1. Asked students to bring a wooden lead pencil, used.
2. In timed steps, took students through writing process, with breaks for discussion, comparison, et cetera.
   A. Prewriting:
      1. Subject and audience - "describe pencil" to
         a) science teacher
         b) art teacher
         c) career/major counselor
         (discussed possible different emphasis and approach)
      2. Gathering specifics:
         Grouping related items (classification: Materials, colors, parts, dimensions, textures, individual pencil characteristics)
      3. Narrowing/expanding (research--i.e. few knew what to call the "shaft")
      4. Finding preliminary organization
      5. Thesis and topic sentences
      6. Thesis and topic sentences.
      7. Rapid drafting

   Note: obvious organization led to repetition. Students discovered in drafting the paragraphs organized around each part, better than groups named above.

3. Writing and revising
   A. Paragraphs (used body paragraph only)
   B. Sentences
   C. Words and phrases (diction
   D. Conventions of usage

   On how to tell if left or right handed user, and if sharpened by a "professional" secretary or art student and so on.

4. Evaluation! (proofing and evaluation)

NOTE: Students seldom really "saw" pencil at first, then discussions.

Charles R. Plunkett
Canada College

- -

Write a brief (2-4 typed pages) paper exploring some aspect of popular culture, an object, an event, person, institution, happening, etc. so that you reveal not only what it is, but also how it somehow shapes and affects our lives or gives meaning or significance to our world. Your paper should contain enough supporting details or evidence to give any reader insight into the subject matter and conviction of your main idea. The organizational pattern of your paper and movement from beginning to end will depend on your choice of subject matter, but hopefully, the essays assigned in Popular Writing in America furnish some examples of possible rhetorical patterns. Popular culture covers anything out there interesting to the populace:

Peanuts, snakes as pets, Mash comic book heroes, flea markets, garage sales, swap meets, wigs, Billy Graham, Burt Reynolds, Olympics, political conventions, Broom Hilda, bitches, Bob Dylan, Neil Diamond, diets, dope, sex, women's rights, pollution, virgins, graffiti, TV dinners, painting-by-the-numbers, massage parlors, Magic Mountain, fashions, Star Wars, W.C. Fields, booze, broads, bombs, etc.,
etc.,
etc.

Mike Finnegan
Cherry Gundry
Orange Coast College

- -

The assignment is in two parts: The first is to write an essay, fully describing a design (see below - these are but a few of the forty which I have made up on 5 x 8 cards).

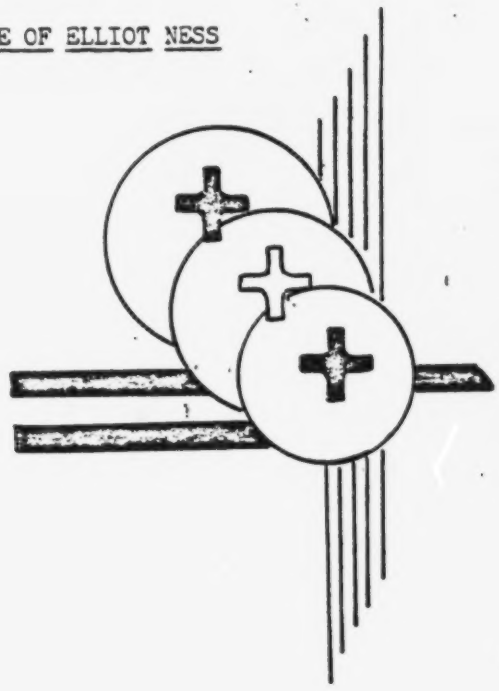
The second part of the assignment is to hand the completed essay to a class mate who is then asked to draw an exact duplicate of the design being described,

using only the words to do so. It is to be stressed in the writing assignment that the essay is not to be a set of drawing instructions in the 'first, you...' sort of development. The attached sheet is the format the student is to follow in the second part of the assignment.

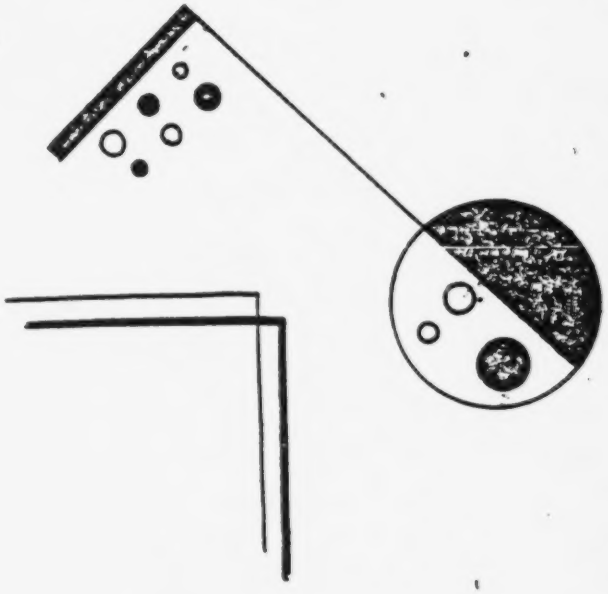
Purpose of the assignment:

1. To stress the need for completeness and accuracy in development.
2. To require careful analysis of a topic before dealing with it: i.e. discern in the card design that it is composed of three or four shapes such as circles, vertical lines or whatever and use that analysis as the organization pattern for the essay.
3. To require the use of transition, both within and between paragraphs in development.
4. To stress handling of numbers in prose exposition.
5. To emphasize that an essay's introductory paragraph is a 'map' to the reader, a guide through the entire work.
6. To make the writer aware of an 'audience' for the writing, in this case, a fellow student who may not necessarily be proficient in drafting or math areas.

30. BRIDE OF ELLIOT NESS



20. VERY DRY WITH NO OLIVE, PLEASE



1. Read the essay.
2. Using the form below, outline the first and second paragraphs.
3. From the description in the essay, draw the figure, using a separate piece of paper.
4. Make criticisms concerning the first two paragraphs on the right of this sheet
5. In a paragraph (use the back of your drawing) discuss the weaknesses and strong points of the entire essay, including the conclusion.

I. Opening paragraph
   A. Thesis statement _____

   _____

   B. Purpose:

   C. Organization:
      1.
      2.
      3.

II. Topic sentence:

   A. Primary support:

      1.

      2.

   B. PS

      1.

      2.

   C. PS

      1.

      2.

___ Concluding/transition sentence:

Robert Blosser
Foothill College

One assignment that has always been popular and works--and combines writing, research, documentation, and evaluation of media--is having each student select a recent major film and bring together the critical reviews of it in an attempt to "referee" the critics. Book or play (live) reviews would work, but students, alas, see more films.

Robert K. Terrill
Mt. San Antonio College

- -

"Consider the sport or activity you like most. Show why you love it."

I used this writing task to show my students that they are intuitively good at planning their work. I used this assignment as a freewriting task after teaching a section on outlining. Alternately, it could be used to convince reticent writers that they have something to say, since students consistently write papers triple their usual length when handling this writing task.

Spencer Sherman
Santa Barbara City College

- -

For the first assignment in my freshman composition course, I concentrate on paragraph development, structure, and tone.

Before the students perform the writing assignment, I lecture upon three points: (1) Structure of the paragraph consists of a topic sentence, the body of the paragraph, and a concluding or transitional sentence; (2) the body of the paragraph may be developed in several ways--in the case of this assignment, narrative, examples, and reasons (each of which I describe in detail); (3) the tone or level of diction is adjusted to the writer's assumptions about the reader(s).

My objectives for this assignment are manifold. (1) Students should be aware that writing is a conscious, calculated process. (2) Structured paragraphs will achieve the desired communications goals. (3) Development of paragraphs can be calibrated to produce certain pre-determined communications goals. (4) Tone or diction will affect the impact of the communication. (5) Judicious arrangement of development and tone is the final arbiter of effective communication. (6) These paragraphs are included among the building blocks for subsequent essays which will incorporate paragraphs developed by the techniques required for this assignment.

As a result of this assignment, I encourage students to think in paragraphs as units of development for essays, and I emphasize the importance of diction in effective communication. (I also point out the variety of "accidents" which may be treated in such an assignment--auto, snow skiing, water skiing, bathtub, fall from tree-top, plane crash, etc.)

Finally, students must learn from this assignment three basic lessons: (1) They must be aware of their readers' needs and be conscious of tone and diction to suit those needs; (2) They must exercise deliberate judgments about structure and development of paragraphs in order to communicate both clearly and effectively; (3) They must utilize lessons from this assignment for longer units of communication, such an essay-length expressions ranging from three paragraphs (or approximately 300 words) to 500-750 word treatments of serious, in-depth topics. Of course, several weeks may be required for the full impression of this assignment to take effect, but the effort is by no means wasted.

I teach community-college students at night. My students are, for the most part, serious and conscientious. This assignment is one that is practical, one that they can dig their teeth into. I respect my students, and I have had good overall feed-back when they go on to Cal. State Long Beach or Fullerton. (I have also taught at both Universities, and know whereof my former students speak.) In effect, my freshman composition course is a survival course, and this assignment is among the most effective components of that course.

Paragraph Assignment

The total assignment requires writing three paragraphs. Each paragraph is numbered below. Each paragraph should be about 150 words long.

1. Dear Mr/Ms. Jones:

   Today I vividly recalled everything you told us in high-school English about writing accurate reports, because I was the first one to arrive after the accident. . .

   Sincerely,

   Dorothy Smith

(Develop this paragraph by telling how you described to police the scene when you arrived and what happened between then and the arrival of the police, the ambulance, and so on. Basic principle: Using concrete details to describe and to narrate an incident. Use formal diction, also known as standard English.)

2. Dear Mom and/or Dad,

   The most unbelievable thing happened to me today. I was the first one to arrive after the accident. . .

   Love,

   Dody

(Develop this paragraph by telling about aspects of the accident which make the experience totally different from anything you have ever known before. Basic principle: Using examples to illustrate your point. Use informal diction.)

3. Dear Sam (friend--same age),

   You wouldn't believe what happened today. I was the first one to get

there after the accident. . .

See ya,

Dotti

(Develop this paragraph by telling about what you did and what you felt. Basic principle: providing reasons for what you did and felt. Use slang.)

REMEMBER THAT THIS ASSIGNMENT REQUIRES YOU TO USE THREE MODES OF DEVELOPMENT: (1) narrative, (2) examples, and (3) reasons. THE ASSIGNMENT ALSO REQUIRES YOU (RESPECTIVELY) TO USE THREE LEVELS OF DICTION: (1) formal, (2) informal, and (3) slang.

Joanne Kashdan
Golden West College

- -

I like to use this assignment in all of my composition classes, whether sub-remedial or freshman composition. It is especially good in lower-level classes for building self-confidence. Students who have difficulty writing more than a paragraph often end up writing 15 pages - a feat which truly amazes them. Higher level students also like the assignment because it provides a nice balance for the heavy concentration on research/essay writing.

I begin the project by assigning several situation descriptions, e.g.: 1) A person sitting at a bus stop. Another person of the opposite sex approaches. They were friends at some time in the past, but haven't seen each other for several years. They talk briefly, but the bus arrives. The writer has to resolve the outcome; 2) A person is sitting alone at a beach. Another person, of the opposite sex, is also alone nearby. The first person is compelled to meet the other, but is uncomfortable about how to proceed. He/she somehow does so. These are only examples of situations which each instructor can invent. It is important in these short situation descriptions that writers are asked to focus on descriptions of environment, people, feelings, thoughts and dialogue. Instructors have a great opportunity, at this point, to clear-up a multitude of punctuation and attack problems.

After an approprite number of these in-class (generally requested by students to take home and finish) short descriptions, I ask students to write a full-length short story, in any genre, complete with description, dialogue, etc. I have developed the following framework for the short story. Without this (or similar) framework, they have a hard time getting started.

Someone, somewhere in the world, decides early in the morning, to go somewhere for a bicycle ride. Something happens to the bicycle. Someone of the opposite sex happens by and helps out. They decide to go somewhere for some kind of boat ride. Something happens to the boat. Finish the story. It is permitted to modify as necessary.

The instructor must spend a great deal of time explaining the assignment, emphasizing that it must be considered as fun, that there are no restrictions

in language or situation, and that the more outrageous the story the better it will probably be.

Finally, some or all of the stories must be read to the class (anonymously). The students love to hear the stories, and most importantly, if they are read, everyone will write one. Granted, this is a long project, taking 2-4 weeks, but the results in terms of student self-confidence ("I can't believe I wrote something that long"), attitude toward English classes, development of student-teacher relationship, etc., is well worth the time. After the assignment, students are willing to try anything. I like to do it about half-way through the semester.

Bill Jacobs
Evergreen Valley College

- -

The enclosed exercise was used originally in a transformational grammar unit, but I have since altered it and use it as a creative writing exercise. I use a number of witty (to bizarre) human interest stories, discuss the writer's imagination, write key words on the board, and have the students create their own stories. They read their stories aloud; we discuss them, improve on them, and finally read the original, having a roaring good time comparing some of the "facts" to some of the students' versions.

HE TELLS IT TO THE JUDGE

1. Key words and phrases. (1) Albert Robbins (2) python (3) Porterville (4) herpetologist (5) captain (6) disconcerting (7) accelerator (8) plight (9) sinister-looking (10) nonpoisonous (11) Municipal Judge (12) courthouse corridor (13) affectionate serpent

2. Pronouncing. Pronounce the words and phrases above.

3. Speculating. What do you think might be the content of a newspaper article using these words and phrases?

4. Listening. As you listen to the reading of the newspaper account, "He Tells It to the Judge," keep in mind the words on the blackboard.

5. Discussing. Teacher and students give first the sequence of events in the article and then offer comments on the significance of what occurred.

6. Writing. Compose two sentences in the spaces below.

   a. A summarizing sentence. _____
   _____
   _____

   b. A thematic sentence. _____
   _____
   _____

7. Sentence combining (without formal instruction in grammar). Combine the following to make one sentence.

   a. The helpless driver deliberately exceeds the speed limit to invite being cited.
      1) A seventeen-foot python escapes from a barrel in the back seat of the car. (Use "When")
      2) A herpetologist is driving toward Porterville. (Use "as")
      3) A compassionate judge dismisses the case. (Use "but")

   _____
   _____
   _____

8. Sentence combining (with formal instruction in grammar).

   a. Matrix: The judge of the court is wisely compassionate.
      Insert (T-AC; use "when"): The judge realizes X.
      Insert (T-NC; use "that"): The herpetologist had a good reason for breaking the law.
      Insert (T-Part): The herpetologist was confronted by a bizarre predicament.

Marie Allen
Santa Ana College

* * * * *

TELLS IT TO THE JUDGE

HE HOPED SPEEDING WAS
JUST THE TICKET FOR SNAKE

By Jerry Belcher
Time Staff Writer

When a guy gets himself all tangled in trouble, it is often said that he's opened a can of worms. What Albert Robbins opened up was a barrel of snake.

Actually, the snake--17 feet long, opened the barrel himself. And then, as Robbins was trying to drive coolly along Highway 65 near Porterville, the affectionate serpent started snuggling up against the back of his master's neck.

As Robbins tried to explain later, it was not a comfortable experience and that's why he happened to be driving 20 miles over the 55-m.p.h. speed limit when the California Highway Patrol officer spotted him.

It's a complicated ending and it goes like this:

Robbins is a 74-year-old herpetologist from Bakersfield and he travels all over putting on reptile shows for kids. He was headed for a show at Burton Elementary School near Porterville Thursday when everything went wrong.

Captain, the python and star of the show, was in the back seat, curled up as usual in the special barrel he travels in. Other assorted reptiles, including rattlers, were snoozing in their separate cages.

Somehow, Captain slithered through a little hatch in the sealed top of the barrel and started roaming around the car's interior. Just curious and friendly but disconcerting to Robbins.

Robbins pulled off to the side of the road and, realizing he couldn't put the big brute back in the barrel without help, starting hailing motorists. A couple slowed, looked closely, and, understandably, drove of.

Then, as Robbins recounted later, he got back in the car, stomped on the accelerator and deliberately zoomed up to 75 m.p.h. His reasoning was that the CHP would see him, stop him and give him some help with the python.

His reasoning was excellent up to a point. CHP officer Velton Lee did halt him. Robbins explained his plight and asked for a hand.

"No way," said Lee, or words to that effect.

Well, then, would the officer please escort him to the school? Nope, he wouldn't. But he did write Robbins a $65 speeding ticket.

The herpetologist, with the snake still winding around the inside of the car, drove on to the school, where teachers and students helped him round up the sinister-looking but nonpoisonous snake. Robbins put on the show, then drove to the courthouse in Porterville to tell his bizarere story to anyone who'd listen.

Assistant Court Clerk Inez Cobb was one of the listeners and she called Municipal Judge Richard Thompson out and told him, "Your honor, this is a story you've never heard before."

She was right. The judge was so taken with the tale that he asked Robbins to put on a little snake show in the courthouse corridor. It was done and afterward the judge and his aides insisted on having their picture taken while holding the big snake, all 17 feet of him.

Now for the happy ending, Judge Thompson, evidence in hand, dismissed the speeding charge on the spot.

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Observe a Scene

As a new reporter for the alternative Ventura weekly news magazine The New Atlantis Review, your first assignment is to observe a scene. Our readers are interested in all kinds of events. You will want to search for an appropriate event which conveys significance to you and which is worth sharing with our readers.

Go somewhere with the idea of writing about what's happening: a restaurant,

the Oxnard airport, LAX, the beach, a shopping mall, a movie, a party, a church service, a dance, a cafeteria, lunch break on a college campus. The world is your oyster.

Pay attention to the stages of the writing process as you write the paper. Become fully involved in each stage, from notetaking, through organization of rough draft material, revising rough drafts, preparing a final draft, and proofreading the finished paper.

In beginning the assignment a good idea is to take notes quickly, jotting impressions and noticing as they flow through your mind. As units of related sentences emerge, begin grouping material into tentative rough draft paragraphs. Revise the rough draft to clarify generalizations and select specific details carefully. Develop the technique of becoming an alert, questioning reader to your writing. Read thoughtfully and responsively, anticipating other readers' needs for sharpness of focus or details and extent of development of ideas. Reading aloud helps you become attuned to the sound of effective sentences and the continuity of sentences in sequence. Listen for the sound of your tone of voice. Be open to momentum at this stage of writing.

Point of view. Clarify point of view. Consciously develop and express your relationship to the experiences which form the subject of your paper. Note when you are revealing personal biases, when you are making judgments, drawing conclusions or perceiving according to preconceived ideas. We are seeking clearly focused writing about objective information as well as the personal touch of your individual ways of observing and your unique perspective of understanding. The key to effective combination of objective-subjective emphasis is balance. Be especially aware of distinctions between, and subtle gradations of, subjective and objective treatment of details. Don't slant the news too much or present a distorted picture of the events you cover. Let reality reveal itself.

Concrete writing. Concrete writing is valued. Develop sensory awareness expressing clear, direct perception of pertinent detail. Show (develop implicitly), don't just tell (develop explicitly). In addition to developing visual detail remember to pay attention to senses other than sight. Evocatively described impressions add a pulsebeat of life flowing through your prose. Meet your deadline.

George Wyner
Ventura College

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REVISING

When executed early in the semester, this exercise seems to boost self-confidence and to ease students into the revising process.

Everyone in the class, including me, tells a story to the rest of the group. It may be a folkloric kind of story, or a family anecdote, or simply a story the student has heard orally from someone else. It should not be a story he or she has read, and ideally it should not be the narrative of a personal experience unless he or she has previously formulated the experience into a sotry and recounted it. I tape the class in which the stories are shared, and at the next meeting I bring in literal transcriptions of them. We all get a copy of everyone's story. Beginning with mine, I ask the students for suggestions about how I might change the first version so that it would work better as a piece of writing; and then I describe additional possibilities for revision that would apply equally well to their own stories. This takes about fifteen minutes, and the students spend the rest of the class starting to tinker with their first versions, while I walk around giving specific suggestions to individuals or answering questions about the revising process. The completed revisions are brought to the next class, and each student reads his/her written story while the rest of the class follows along with their copies of the first version. After each reading we discuss the kinds of changes that the writer has made. I collect the revised versions and return them with written comments (primarily descriptive rather than critical) at the next meeting.

Anne Posel
Cornell University
Ithaca, New York

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A Student's Tabulation of Errors and Suggested Revisions

The frustrated English teacher will frequently complain: "My students keep making the same mistakes again and again, and they do not remember and follow my suggestions for revising their papers." One possible solution (though certainly not a panacea) is to require each student to keep all writing assignments of the course in a folder after he has corrected them and to keep a tabulation chart attached to the inside front cover of the folder. This chart will catalog the instructor's suggestions for revising both content and organization of each paper and will contain a list of errors in grammar, syntax, spelling and diction found on that paper. On the chart beneath each error, the student must rewrite in corrected form the entire sentence that contained that error and must underline the specific correction. Then as the student confronts his next writing assignment, he is strongly urged to keep that chart before him as he writes to avoid a reoccurrence of his common problems and to follow the constructive suggestions made earlier by his instructor. Whenever such problems do reoccur, the instructor should assign to that student some exercises that will clarify and reinforce in the student's mind the value of such revisions. This process should be repeated so long as necessary.

Allen Powell
Dallas Baptist College
Dallas, Texas

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READING AND WRITING

Since reading and writing seem to be (we keep saying) two sides of a single process, and since activity in one seems to enhance both interest and competence in the other, I generally attempt to devise writing assignments that require both. Here is one that surprised me; that is, it actually worked for several students who had previously shown little interest in either reading or writing.

1. Initiate a limited discussion of what makes one piece difficult to read and another easy. Urge students to be precise in describing the factors that influence level of difficulty.
2. Hand them a copy of the Fry Formula for Determining Grade Level of Readability (or any of several other similar formulas). Show them how to use it by having them apply it in the classroom to one or more current reading assignments.
3. Ask them to apply the formula to three or four other works of their own choosing, works representing a variety of materials and levels, such as a newspaper article, a magazine article, a novel, a history text, one of their own essays.
4. Urge them to study their findings. (All of the students were surprised at what they found, especially with regard to their own writing.)
5. Assign an essay in which they describe the process and set forth their conclusions.

Aside from the two chief results--a more active interest in reading (some students went wild and tried to apply the formula to ten or twelve works, including billboard messages and the California Educational Code!); and a set of good essays--I was most pleased by the quality of the classroom discussions. With surprising quickness, students turned aside from their usual easy, general, and vague comments on the subject in favor of specific points and questions. Those, in turn, accounted for much of the noticeably higher quality of their resulting essays. Some students, of course, questioned both the reliability and the universal applicability of such reading formulas, and the ensuing arguments contributed importantly to the success of the exercise.

D.L. Emblen
Santa Rosa Junior College

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MECHANICS

A. Commas

Too Few or Too Many Commas

Ask the student to write a paragraph, omitting all commas but indicating the

ends of sentences with periods. Then ask the student to read the paragraph out loud to himself or to someone else and decide where the commas--and semicolons, if any--belong.

Variant: Present some student writing with all the punctuation marks removed. Then ask the class to insert the punctuation marks and to justify alternative choices.

Margaret Liu
Northern Virginia Community College
Alexandria, Virginia

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Attacking the Comma Splice

Ask the student to write four or five sentences that state what he and his parents did last night, assuming that he and they went different ways in different activities. Both activities must be given the same emphasis, and no connecting words like, and, but, or, nor may be used to join the statements. Then ask him to punctuate the sentences in the proper places. Finally, ask the student to combine all these statements into a single sentence and insert the necessary punctuation. (The last step will force the student to use commas and semicolons, instead of all periods.)

Allen Powell
Dallas Baptist College
Dallas, Texas

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Strictly speaking, I don't teach freshman composition, but (pick your own euphemism) developmental, remedial, or bonehead English. My students tend to write either short choppy simple sentences, long looping compound sentences, or bundles of fragments laced together with commas or and's.

Then one day I stole a technique from my colleague Jack Lynch and adapted it to my own methods. My classes had already studied the comma rules; now I forced them to use them. My instructions were something like this:

> In this composition, use each comma rule at least once, and put the letter for the appropriate rule above <u>each</u> comma and semicolon used in the paper.

Artificial? Yes. But it required, and got, variation in sentence structure: compound sentences, sentences beginning with adverbial clauses or phrases, sentences with non-restrictive clauses, sentences containing parallel structures.

It did not eliminate all the run-ons or fragments, but it certainly helped.

Although it was not intended to improve rhetoric or content, in some cases I believe it did. (I wish I could say that it fired up the students with enthusiasm, but that would be not only a lie, but a transparent lie.)

Robert F. Moore
Grossmont College

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B. Pronouns

Overuse of Pronouns

I create an essay, sometimes yearly, which begins only with the pronoun He, copying one student who had written an essay on symbolism in Hemingway's novel. In her introduction she was re-capitulating his biographical detail. She consistently used "he" to begin new paragraphs and never varied her sentence structure at all. The student sees that any overuse or reliance on any pronoun becomes absurd. I also admonish that no new paragraph should have an antecedent in the paragraph above.

Darlienne Jensen
Olympia Technical Community College
Olympia, WA

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Students are asked to write an expository prose composition containing no pronouns. Pronouns are defined and listed. The reasons for the assignment are given.

The reasons for the assignment are: Pronoun errors, which tend to be many on other compositions, are impossible. Informal and immature writing becomes automatically more formal and mature. Students are forced to write about the subject and papers reflect a more objective, broader view. The other wise common fault of letting pronouns take the place of thinking or of more precise language is eliminated.

Of course, students are advised that the assignment works well in expository prose writing, and that such a technique may not be appropriate for other forms of writing.

Veronica Willis
San Diego Mesa College

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C. Fragments

Fragments

The student needs to be able to identify a sentence fragment. He will ponder over any word group that contains a verbal, assuming that it is a "complete thought."

A sentence can often be "tested" by verifying that one can prove or disprove what is said. Read it aloud and listen.

Ex.: Because I left my car unlocked. What happened? Is there anything said that you can get hold of? Try this one.

Ex.: Because I left my car unlocked, someone was able to get in.

Another Example

Ex.: If the bus comes early.

Ex.: If the bus comes early, we will have time for coffee before class.

Edna Holland
Florida Junior College
Jacksonville, Florida

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D. Modifiers

You say that you need some writing tasks; I got one that works for my kind of student. I teach mainly remedial people, those who need "the class before the class before freshman English." "Bonehead," we used to call it, in the halcyon days of honestly descriptive prose. Academics probably now call it "pre-literate, sub-remedial, solutional studies."

In my bonehead English class, after the students have had some familizarization with modifiers and after they've done a heartache amount of work picking out and identifying adverbs and adjectives in sentence level homework, that stuff characterized as a bunch of sentences ripped untimely from many wombs, I hand them worksheets like the enclosed. Using their newborn knowledge of modification, which I define for them as "that which clarifies while keeping intact," I ask them to recast this dully informative paper, giving it "more interest," whatever they may think "more interest" means. When they return their assignments, we read the good ones in class and note that several things happened:

1. In some mystical way, a story coherently emerged. (Obviously, it really isn't mystical; I use the word mystical in a remedial class, early on, rather than to declaim about the mature mind's habitual search for a confounding combination of both imagery and order. You know you gotta sell this stuff like Hoover vacuum cleaners.)

2. The best part: In a significant definition of the word, my students have written an interesting piece. It wasn't entirely fictional, because they didn't make up the story line. It wasn't factual at all. It was just interesting, and for all of my students, interest is what they needed.

3. They learned something about adverbs and adjectives, first-hand. Consequently, most of their choices of modifiers were dull, tedious, overworked, hackneyed--all of it--but my putting modifiers of their own in this exercise, they became better able to identify modification in the sentences written by others.

As I said, this is an exercise I use in remedial English; perhaps it is not of use for your project.

Worksheet

A lady lived in a house. The house was where two streets crossed. She had two daughters and a son. The son worked on cars. One of the daughters was married. The other one worked. She was a painter. She made money. She helped to pay for the house's expenses. This made her mother happy. One day there was a fire. They had to live in a motel for a week. Then they came back.

Don K. Pierstorff
Long Beach City College

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USAGE

The scene is English 50 (Pre-English 1A). The students are working on words that are often confused: affect, effect, principal, principle; there, their. The instructor tells the class that he has several "five pointers," errors that will be penalized five points each time they occur after the third paper. They will be circled and penalized in the first three papers too, but the penalties will not be counted. The errors listed are those involving the use of their and there (they're is not allowed in English 50), too and to, its and it's, effect and affect, and the apostrophe.

The purpose of the lesson is to make the students feel the importance of eliminating these errors from their work.

The reaction and results have been good.

Harold Snelgrove
College of the Redwoods

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Who/Whom

In the student's paper where the problem is repeated enough times to make a "cure" necessary, have the student enumerate all sentences in which "who/whom" was used. Next, starting at the who/whom have student copy only the clause in which "who/whom" appeared but instead of "Who/Whom" draw a line. Then have the student read each of these clauses to him/herself, but instruct the student to write either "he/him" in the blank instead of the original "Who/Whom." Each "he" replaces a "who," each "him," replaces a "whom." Few students have difficulty choosing between he or him.

Juanite D. Cook
Western Iowa Technical Community College
Sioux City, Iowa

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SENTENCE-COMBINING

This is a sentence combining exercise. Instead of giving the students my own simple sentences to combine, I ask them to develop sentences of their own and then combine as many as possible.

We start with words that describe what you see, smell, taste or hear in a bad restaurant. They like to relive this experience, recalling the worst details.

We might come up with something like this:

Dirty waitress	slippery floors
stained silverware	smell of burning oil
cracked dishes	etc., etc.

Then we categorize the things sensed:

Waitress:	Menu:
chewing gum	spotted
tennis shoes	greasy
sloppy makeup	poorly typed
dirty fingernails	

We write short sentences using the descriptive phrases:

The waitress is chewing gum.
She is wearing tennis shoes.
The shoes are filthy.
(etc.)

We then try to combine as many sentences as possible.

Example: The waitress is chewing gum like a cow chewing her cud, and she is wearing filthy tennis shoes.

Paul Kaser
Reedley College

UNITY AND CONCISENESS

Our Freshman Comp. class here is based on literary criticism on the short story. We read and discuss the stories in class and then request the student to write a literary interpretation of about 400 words. Many of the stories do indeed "turn on" the students, the best of which has been I.B. Singer's "Gimpel the Fool."

We hope that during the class's discussion of each story we can gain an appreciation for the techniques of fiction which contribute to the story's meanings. We call our essay assignments "Theme Writing" so that, despite our ignoring the traditional rhetorical approaches, following through a thesis realizes our fundamental view of how to unite.

Bernard Zavidowsky
Citrus College

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Writing Effective Memorandums

Memorandums are often used instead of letters in order to inform, to request, and/or to document.

Interoffice memos are an essential part of the operation of most large businesses, serving to keep information current, establish responsibility, measure progress, and promote cooperation. Interoffice memos travel the clearly established communication channels in an organization.

Since memos are written and since they are often filed, they serve as a record. In fact, oral communication is frequently confirmed by a memorandum which summarizes the gist of the conversation and serves as a record and reminder.

An employee's memorandums are a reflection of his competence.

Memos differ from business letters in several respects:

a. Memos do not require a salutation, inside address, or complimentary close
b. Overtones of cordiality, conciliation, persuasion, etc.--important in business letters--are of less concern in memos. Memos have a factual, efficient, work-centered tone.

Like business letters, memos should be CLEAR and BRIEF.

Pointers for writing efficient memos:

1. If a printed memo form is not used, type or write a memo heading at the left margin:

Date:

To:

From:

Subject: (Capitalize all important words in the subject line, or put it in "caps.")

2. Memos are frequently signed or initialed.

3. MAKE THE MESSAGE CLEAR, DIRECT, BRIEF, AND AS SIMPLE AS POSSIBLE. It should be organized for the convenience of the reader:
   a. Use numbered lists.
   b. If reference is made to a document essential to understanding the subject of the memo, attach copies of the document or give clear identifying information so that the document can be found.

4. If, as is often the case, the memo is handwritten, be sure it is legible.

Date: October 18, 1976 SAMPLE:

To: Joe Foreman

From: All Mann

Subject: Purchase #1332
In purchase #1332 for Oct. 15, items AX20585, AX2110, and B21158 were left out. Please include them on a new order, get Jake to sign it, and leave it on my desk so I can sign it and mail it Wed.

Date: October 20, 1976 SAMPLE:

To: All Field Office Managers

From: Personnel Director

Subject: SUPERVISORY TRAINING PROGRAM, BLANK UNIVERSITY

A one-week Supervisory Training Program will be conducted on the Blank University campus beginning Nov. 15. The program is especially planned for supervisors in credit and collection work, and it will include two three-hour sessions on communication problems.

This program requires each participant to stay on campus from Sunday evening to Friday noon. All costs of the program will be paid by our agency.

It is requested that each Field Office Manager nominate three supervisors from his office and list them in order of preference for this course. This list should be submitted to me in the Central Office by Nov. 1.

R.B. Peterson
Personnel Director
Mercantile Credit Agency

ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Your instructor is conducting a survey of occupational experience in his classes. Write a memo to him on the subject: Occupational Experience of (your name).

2. Write a memo to Richard Reid asking him to speak to the LFCC student body on (choose a subject).

   You have already secured his consent to speak on November 8, 7:00 p.m., in the student lounge. He has asked you to state in writing the information you want him to cover.

Anne L. Legge
Lord Fairfax Community College
Middleton, Virginia

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A Useful Antidote to Wordiness
("Logorrhea" - from logos, word & rhea, flux.)

We are too rich in words, and thus we tend to waste them. Or, we are fond of words that are too big to sound true. (We are wrong in school to put a high price on big words.) It is the long words that blue what we mean.

The short words are the ones for each day. They are the words we use for our love or our hate; with them we point to the good and the bad. Brief, harsh words tell our grief: we sob or moan or cry. Or, it is the small, soft words that speak of joy and care: we laugh and hum and sing what we feel.

Short words are words of might.

ASSIGNMENT:

Write a short piece (less than one page, double-spaced) entirely in words of one syllable.

- # A description of a person is a good exercise.
- # A description of an action is fairly simple and lends itself to the use of short, vivid words.

Ann Hostetler
(from Bonnie Robinson)
Golden West College

- -

Answer Each of the Following Questions Briefly and Concisely. One Paragraph For Each Should Be Enough.

1. Explain how to perform a simple household repair, like mending a sock or fixing a leaky faucet.

2. Define one of the following terms: hot rod, rock and roll, pearl, and automation.

3. What are your reasons for taking this course. (be frank)

4. Should college students be paid for athletic services? Support your answer with brief arguments.

5. What is the difference between an "eager beaver" and an "apple polisher"?

PLEASE RETURN THIS SHEET WITH YOUR ANSWERS.

Richard Sandau
Fresno City College

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AMBIGUITY

For Rent: Nice bedroom in shady neighborhood!

Take out an accident insurance policy now! One customer broker her arm the other day and we paid her $500. You may be the lucky one tomorrow.

Don't kill your wife! Let our washing machine do your dirty work!

Why go elsewhere to be cheated when you can come here!

In case of asphyxiation, apply artificial respiration until the patient is dead.

NEW AUTOS WILL HIT SIX MILLION

Chicago is almost at the bottom of Lake Michigan.

We are selling the same eggs we had last winter.

Still serving the same home-cooked chicken dinner we have served for the last 75 years.

For Sale: Big dog. Beautiful animal, good watchdog. Will eat anything.

Especially fond of children.

Zanzibar is noted for monkeys. The British Governor lives there.

All people were petrified during the Stone Age.

Ever child laying an egg in the doorman's hand will be admitted free.

When a boy and girl are walking on the sidewalk, the girl should walk inside the boy.

Reports reveal that cars kill 100 people daily. Let's resolve to do better.

Try to spend an evening at the new Riviera Club. Just the thing for a dull evening.

Dresses sold for ridiculous figures.

Our motto is to give our customers the lowest price and workmanship.

The ball struck the catcher on the right temple and knocked him cold. X-ray pictures of his head showed nothing.

A check at the public swimming pool revealed some startling figures.

Wanted: Woman to sew buttons on the fourth floor.

Hear the Weatherman--the complete dope on the weather instantly.

Lyle Larsen
Santa Monica College

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POINT OF VIEW

Recount an episode from your own life so as to bring out as effortlessly as possible its most universal significance. Write about this episode four times, each time telling it from a different point of view. Or write about four different episodes. (Point of view will shift with each.)

Dick Dodge
Santa Monica College

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Suggestions for Early Memory Paper

1. Choose a memory from your early childhood and use it for a short essay (about two pages).
   a. Put yourself into a fantasy in which you try to relive the experience and recall it in detail with all the accompanying tastes, sights, smells, and sounds.
   b. Talk to someone about it. Perhaps someone else who was there can help you fill in those details you can't recall. However, don't be reluctant in your essay to admit that you cannot recall everything about the incident.
   c. Brainstorm on paper; that is, write down all the details you can remember in whatever order they come to you.

2. Outline your paper.
   a. How will you introduce your theme? How will you engage your reader's attention? Do you have a thesis statement?
   b. How will you develop your idea? Have you described the incident in sufficient detail? Have you included the people who were with you at the time? What was their reaction to the situation you describe? Where were you at the time? Give the reader a "sense of place" through your description. (Remember that the reader was not with you when the incident occurred and cannot know what you do not tell him/her in the essay.)
   c. How will you conclude your essay? Will you end it with the last fact or detail in the incident? Will you tell what emotion you feel as you relive the experience? Will you tell what emotion you feel as you relive the experience? Will you end it by explaining the significance of the event in your life?

3. Write out a first draft of the essay, following your outline. Then go over the first draft. Read it aloud.

4. Refine your sentences, Tighten your paragraphs. Examine your spelling. Take a close look at your punctuation.

5. Write a second draft, polishing and refining as you go along.

6. Type your paper double-spaced, allowing margins all around the page.

7. Proofread your paper so that you can eliminate typographical errors.

8. Relax!

Margaret Callanan
Orange Coast College

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A writing activity that works well is writing about a person from three points of view. For example, the student may choose his mother. He would then write three essays - one "I" composition as the mother views herself,

another the view of the son as he sees her, and a third that of the husband or a grandchild or as her mother sees her. This not only works with point of view, but it requires empathy to put yourself in someone else's shoes. Also the "voice" of each person requires a special flavor to make each of the three essays different from one another. This particular assignment takes a longer time to accomplish than the one above.

Flo Brenninger
Fresno City College

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Writing assignment for Point of View paper: Students have a choice between a regular composition, or a rewriting of a selected passage from a fairly straightforward story from a point of view different from the one in the story. I select 2 or 3 appropriate passages of 1-2 pages, each making a complete episode, including some dialogue, and assign a particular point of view, usually one person's. They can write in either 3d person limited omniscient, or 1st person. This gives them some choice of episode and some choice of point of view.

Why? Because it makes a nice change for them and me, it forces them to master the mechanics of dialogue, and since we've already studied Characterization, it reviews the examination of character (the thoughts and observations of the selected person have to tally with that person's background, age and personality). A couple of stories I have used with this assignment are "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky" and "You Could Look it Up". "The Lost Boy" by Wolfe will do if you give them Part I or Part IV. Oh-- and why for Point of View? because they REALLY understand Point of View when they get done!

Margaret Gwathmey
Skyline College

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STYLE

I approached the following writing assignments from a personal, emotive, reaction perspective because students, in my opinion, learn to write better when they write with controlled emotion from the "I at the center" viewpoint, not to be confused with egotism. This helps them to develop a personal uniqueness of style which is what education is all about!

"Controlled reverie" is an early assignment; "Real beliefs" is a mid-term one.

This is an exercise in "controlled reverie."

Pick a time to concentrate; then listen carefully to what you are hearing at that moment. Select only one or two of the sounds and allow your imagination to take over.

Use these sounds to create a "fantasy based on truth." Let these sounds jog your mind. Your paper can be as imaginative as you wish to make it, but the real sounds you are hearing must be a central part of it. (Ex.: You hear a faucet dripping, and suddenly your mind becomes enveloped in the "drip drip: of a Chinese water torture fantasy.)

Rough it out as you are thinking; then refine and restructure the piece, carefully selecting rich, "impact" words to match tone and mood. Turn in both rough and final draft; 250 words minimum.

PLEASE RETURN THIS SHEET UNMARKED.

Topic:

What are your REAL beliefs about death, immortality, and God. These are not necessarily the views that you state publicly.

If you wish this paper to be private, please write "confidential" in the upper left-hand corner in case we decide to read some of the papers in class.

A topic outline and 300-word minimum paper.

PLEASE RETURN THIS SHEET UNMARKED.

Joseph Coppola
San Diego City College

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Write a strong letter of advice from a parent to a person of your own age. Then also write a reply. The reply may be written as you would write in now or as you might reply ten years from now. Try to take parent's point of view when writing first letter.

Bill Greene
Santa Monica College

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I have been using a language reader called Speaking of Words (eds. MacKillop and Cross) which has a fine section on language abuses such as doublespeak and goggledygook. After discussions about the use (and abuse) of euphemisms by public speakers (the military, politicians, advertisers), I ask students to write a paper about their own use of euphemisms. I ask them to focus on one occasion or a series of related occasions when they have used euphemistic

language and then to discuss why and how they were using it, including a consideration of whether euphemisms are "lies" or tactful, useful means of communicating. This seems to generate some interesting papers.

Janice Philbin
Antelope Valley College

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My college freshman studnets have enjoyed and benefitted from the LINGUISTICS PAPER.

A few of many possible topics:
- euphemisms
- slang
- vocational jargon
- origin of family names
- international language (eg, Esperanto)

Requirements:
- Thesis sentence in first paragraph.
- Few dozen examples
  - half in sentences
  - half listed in columns
- Plus content which answers: who, why, where, when, how..
- As well as disadvantages and advantages to the reader.

Lee W. Speer
College of San Mateo

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Oral instructions given just prior to the writing (in class):

Compose an appropriately entitled deductive expository paragraph of at least six sentences discussing what to you is the ugliest word (or the most beautiful word) in the English language (choose one or the other, not both).

Whenever you cite (or refer to) the word itself, put it in quotation marks. However, do not quote its referent.

Example: To me the word "love" is the most beautiful word in the English language. Without love, the world would be cold and animalistic.

This elementary activity was meant to give experience in several areas:
1. Expanding a topic sentence into a deductive paragraph.
2. Expressing thoughts about certain diction involving denotation and connotation.
3. Composing good clear sentences reasonably free of errors.

References: McCrimmon, Writing With a Purpose (text)
Ferrell and Salerno, eds., Strategies in Prose (supplementary text)

Robert J. Shaver
Fresno City College

- -

For this assignment, you are to write your obituary.

Imagine your obituary is to appear in a newspaper (choose what newspaper--the San Mateo Times, the San Francisco Chronicle, the Christian Science Monitor, or whatever paper you wish to use) and try to write in the style of the obituaries in the paper you choose. Imagine that yours is one of the featured obits, with at least six or seven column inches of information.

You sould also choose the date for your obit--May 1, 1978, or sometime five, ten, twenty, forty or more years from now.

Naturally, if you imagine the story of your life as told in the future, the obit will include those events which you hope will be those of your future life.

Either at the beginning or at the end of your obituary, identify the newspaper and the date your are imagining.

Susan Petit
College of San Mateo

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This is what might be called a mini writing task. It involves writing 100-word sentences to teach a number of things, subordination, parallelism, punctuation, and an ear for rhythm since the sentence must be suspended for more than the usual number of words. It helps to eliminate the burbear of run-ons and fragments. At first students are sure it is impossible, but then they are challenged and so it goes.

I usually use this as an in-class project so I can go from desk to desk supervising the progress and getting them to recognize errors. Sometimes the better students create small poems.

Preparation for these sentences includes studying subordinate clauses, adjective phrases, apositives, parallel construction, participial phrases and the like. If a sentence is very good, it can be recorded and mixed with appropriate background music.

Some samples: (student)

After the feature is over, after "the End" flashes across the screen and the

theme song dies away, after the audience has left the theater in a noisy, excited mob which slowly fades into the chilly darkness of the night, leaving behind the almost empty theater--a waste auditorium, empty except for a multitude of smashed popcorn boxes, Pepsi cups, and candy wrappers strewn on the spotted carpet and between the seats--only then can begin the ritual of cleaning up, a task that breaks the stillness with friendly conversation and wisecracks of the ushers as they begin by picking up the empty boxes, mopping up the spilled Pepsi, the spots on the carpet, sweeping between and under the seats and noisily leaving the theater just as it was before the performance--cold, dark and silent.

Slowly ascending the stairs to the attic and carefully rummaging through the piles of old furniture, ancient picture, dated magazines, battered chests and other assorted rubbish--for that is what it was, she found the old trunk, a big, black, heavy thing, with rusted parts and a broken lock, covered with dust and cobwebs, a battered old thing that had been many places and seen many things while accompanying its owner on her travels and her many moves from place to place and then had finally been retired to the doubtful honor of being the trusted keeper of an assortment of antiques, heirloom, souvenirs and other prized possessions that were a part of the owner's past, like the trunk itself.

Flo Brenninger
Fresno City College

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For several terms I'd encountered a block against using images in composition, at least by those students who didn't already write about things and colors. On a lark I tried the concretely visual first: given Wallace Stevens' "Study of Two Pears" and a cup of selected crayons, each student set out to accurately draw what the poem presents. Then each creation was posted and the class scrutinized them, looking for the most accuate. To clarify what this project had to do with writing, I asked the class to read the images in the poem, while relating them to the senses. To "test" or deepen the lemon, I later passed out one Hershey Kiss to each student, asking for a list of images that could help an artist draw a replica if the real candy were not available as a model. I think this sequence brought more images into compositions.

Trish Geddes
Cypress College

- -

I have guided students in Ed Sundberg's classes at Cabrillo College through a highly successful imagery exercise. The object of imagery is to encourage students to develop the ability to describe and write with intimate familiarity.

Imagery is primarily an exercise in relaxation and light suggestion. Through a series of repeated phrases, I "guide" the students into "becoming" an

object they hold in their hands, usually a personal item from a pocket or purse. I guide them gently, slowly, step-by-step in, step-by-step out. After "coming back," they rest a moment, then begin writing about what they felt and experienced. The entire process takes roughly 20 minutes. Ed, too, participates and writes as a member of class.

I encourage students to share their experiences in class. Occasionally, disapproval and criticism is expressed, and I regard these feelings as valid, and find them equally interesting. The imagery discussion then becomes a time when both Ed and I emphasize that a student has every right to disagree with an instruction, and should not be afraid to do so, just as a student should not be afraid to write and share what has been written.

Dylan Chanly
Tutor for Ed Sundberg
Cabrillo College

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1. Write a paper characterizing a person who has had strong influence on you, either positive or negative. To what degree is your characterization a stereotype?

2. Compose a letter of advice to a young friend or relative about how to get along in the world. (These papers can later be used for class discussion or small group work.)

3. Write a paper on your choice of three or four people since Christ who have most influenced Western civilization. (Depending on the type of paper, the student may write on only one of these people or all of them.)

> These three assignments can be on-the-spot, one-class hour assignments or longer, more serious papers. The central value of each, perhaps, is that the student is forced in a genial way to think seriously. Interest is usually high, particularly if a follow-up discussion allows defense of disparate positions (especially on #3). Used early in the course, these assignments help establish a tone that is "intellectual."

Terry Kimble
Skyline College

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SMALL GROUP APPROACH

The Value of Small-Group Projects in Freshman Composition

In the not-very-original belief that writing is often a lonely activity accompanied by insecurity, I have worked on methods of alleviating both the loneliness and the anxiety. To a certain extent, both are interrelated since individual students are not always aware how their work relates to the quality of work produced by other students or to the standards by which the instructor evaluates the writing of all students. My concern is not so much that students merely compare their work to the work of other students but that they learn from others that various approaches are possible.

To help students understand the course objectives, I discuss them in class, and I link all class projects and exercises to specific objectives, as much as possible letting the students know my presuppositions and my justifications for the particular exercises. From the very beginning of each semester the course outline and relatively detailed objectives are placed on reserve in our Instructional Resource Center. This openness, coupled with voluntary one-on-one conferences dealing with the major essays in the course, sets many students somewhat at ease. (This is substantiated by student comments made anonymously on course evaluations at the end of each semester.)

To make the work of individual students available to other students, another way of relieving anxiety and a way of helping students learn from each other, I've been doing several things. First, with the individual student's permission, I xerox good essays and place them also on reserve in the Instructional Resource Center. Second, students read in-class exercises aloud. Admittedly, this can cause anxiety, but there are ways to hold it to a minimum. In most cases, the students have options; they do not have to write on just one topic or do just one particular exercise. If they, nevetheless, still have a bad day or draw a blank, they can say "Pass" when it's their turn to read. In that event, these in-class exercises--always upgraded--become written assignments to be submitted on the next occasion that the class meets. For the most part, this option is not abused, and as the semester moves along, the students feel more comfortable with me, their fellow students, and reading aloud. Third, for many students, working in small groups alleviates loneliness and anxiety while allowing students to learn from and to teach their fellow students.

In addition to using small-group activities to make students feel more comfortable I had in mind also that the variation in approach would serve as a change of pace. Eventually, experience showed me that there are quite a few additional benefits to the small-group approach. For example, James Christian (Philosophy: An Introduction to the Art of Wondering) discusses supportive dialogue in such a manner as to provide a valid rationale for small-group work. According to Christian, in supportive dialogue there is

> mutual aid in exploration. Two or more minds think parallel, as it were, in analyzing a meaning-event. They ask questions of self and others alike, shraring ideas and insights along the way. Fortunately, our minds are not shaped by the same mold.

> We see different things in the joint exploration process. Shared insights expand the understanding and awareness of each person. The inherent polarization of the adversary approach is lacking in supportive dialogue. Each individual shares his own doubts, thought problems, fallacies, trial-and-error mistakes, and so on, just as readily as he shares his insights.

Along the same lines, Stanford and Roark (Human Interaction in Education) write about the benefits of group discourse. On the cognitive level, "group discussion gives the participant a chance to learn new information from others." Perhaps of more significance, it is through group discussion that the student

> consolidates his own learning. For most people verbalizing an idea or concept helps to fix it in the memory and aids integration with other concepts. Furthermore, the process of discussing an idea helps the student sharpen his opinions and clarify his own point of view.

Stanford and Roark also allude to benefits on the psychological level:

> Through participation in classroom discussion he (the student) can gain feelings of acceptance and belonging. He perceives that his views matter to the others in the group because they need him in order to accomplish their goals. He is also given an opportunity to ventilate his feelings in a nonthreatening atmosphere.

Finally, Stanford and Roark mention social benefits of small-group activities. As a group, they learn that they must set clear goals, take collective responsibility for contributions, learn to listen carefully to each other, cooperate with each other, and arrive at a consensus.

For the reasons just cited, I feel justified in using a variety of small-group exercises during the semester. Depending on the complexity of the project, the students spend one to four class periods working together. The following exercise, a relatively simple narration-description essay, has been treated successfully during a fifty-minute peirod in about the fifth or sixth week in the semester.

The Party

Objectives: organization; development and support; transitions (See also the Special Instructions.

General Instructions: Have students arrange themselves in groups of four for the purpose of writing an in-class cooperative essay. (If there are less than four students in a group, have those students write only middle paragraphs.)

The Situation: Tell the students they have been invited to a party hosted by Frankenstein and Dracula either at Dr. Frankenstein's home castle along the Rhine or at Count Dracula's hilltop castle in Transylvania. The students in each group decide among themselves who will describe each of any three of the

following: the grounds and facade of the castle, the grand hall, the tower, the dungeon, the kitchen, the dining room, the rumpus room, the secret room accessible only through the fireplace (or sliding panle or pivoting bookcase, etc.).

Specific Instructions: Tell the students to discuss their approach: e.g., point of view, tone, verb tense.

Time: Students have completed this task in thirty minutes without difficulty. They have seen enough horror films and horror film parodies on television and at movie theaters that concrete detail comes readily to mind. I have found that there will be animated discussion for about five minutes or so at the beginning of the work period and for a few minutes at the end of the work period. In general, there is only the sound of scratching pens during the middle fifteen to twenty minutes.

Reading Aloud: For the last twenty minutes of the period, the groups read their essays aloud. Usually, there is no problem finding a group to volunteer.

Don Heidt
College of the Canyons

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PEER HELP

Writer's name _____

Reader's name _____

Dear Reader:
Please read a fellow student's work and write your comments on this sheet.

1. In general, did the writer follow the assignment? If not, what is missing?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. Did the writer select detail carefully? List four or five specific or con-

crete terms from the paper if you can find some.

3. Are there any sentence fragments (N.S.) or comma splices (ROC)?

4. Check one:

The sentences are a bit short and choppy _____
The sentences are a bit rambling _____
The sentences are too much alike_____
The sentences are varied and interesting_____

If none of the above comments fit, write how you would describe the sentences.

5. Do you find any wild, colorful spellings? Any misspelled words?

6. Did any part confuse you?

7. Have you any suggestions to help the writer make a more effective essay?

8. What part pleased you? Be specific. Write here any good words, pats on the back, orchids, smiles, that you have for the writer.

(continue good things on the back)

Ann Hostetler
(from Bonnie Robinson)
Golden West College

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THE WHOLE METHOD

I wish I could provide you with something startling; however, I have found that the special chemistry of success is more frequently a matter of propinguity rather than the result of special preparation. Nevertheless, I have found that approaching a single aspect of composition (e.g. unity) separately and engaging the student in rewrite work until the principle is understood works well, especially if one removes the threat of letter grade and judges the student's effort as satisfactory or rewrite. Such a technique focuses the student's efforts and allays the sense of failure and fragmentation when all aspects of rhetoric are criticized simultaneously. Naturally, mastery of techniques should be cumulative (i.e. 1. thesis clarity, 2. thesis clarity-unity, 3. thesis clarity-unity-coherence, 3. thesis clarity-unity-coherence-pattern of development, etc. Nothing more than the tried and true - precisely what Garrison is up to.

David Sundstrand
Citrus College

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What do you mean by "worked?" If you mean, as I do, an assignment that produced interesting essays in coherent,.organized language largely free from mechanical errors, then nothing has worked for many years. I occasionally get such essays, of course, but never from more than a tiny minority of any one class. Most of my students in English 1A came from high schools which have required little writing in English classes or any other classes. If they have written, more often than not they have kept journals which no instructor has ever judged on felicity of language or mechanical correctness. The students are affronted when I do judge them on such matters.

By the way, my students in 1A do not write in the classroom. They have a week's warning of an assignment; consequently I expect a piece of writing that is intelligible, free from errors and readable. I am usually disappointed, despite the fact that I vary assignments from those requiring objective, accurate reporting of ideas to those allowing considerable subjectivity.

T. Howell Breece
College of Marin

- -

As an English teacher for six years, and a writer/editor for many years before that, I had gotten bogged down. I was rewarding creativity with "oohs and ahs," but no one's style was improving. But I always got quite amazing results with the term papers - literate, researched, interesting, and worthwhile. I decided it was the oohs and ahs that did it.

But it's more than that, apparently. Somehow, in discussing the term papers, I made the individual "thing" of each student - much as I would in talking of their writing to a contributor to a publication. And it worked beautifully.

I also correct the papers before the final copy, much as an editor would. I have them look over my should while I do it. The papers come out pefect - and I am now publishing the best as features in the college newspaper. So they will see their work in print.

If there is anything in all of this that is helpful, I'm glad. I think the classroom hitherto has lacked the immanence of the outside world. And yet, where is the world more on fire than in the field of literature and thought? So my particular device for bringing that immanence into the classroom was to treat the writers like writers are treated anywhere (or should be!) - as delicate, creative correctible little flowers.

Diane T. Volz
Ojai Valley News, Inc.

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I can't think of any "successful writing tasks" over the last 21 years, but I can think of lots of pieces of good writing done in my classes. I rely on a good text I can elaborate on (Hall, Writing Well) and a book of readings that show people there are all kinds of good writing (I hope, my own People and Ideas, with Bob Baylor) and a lot of personal contact. I also think that being a practicing writer yourself helps; tell all the comp teachers to test themselves by trying to get something published. I like to insist on approving all topics in a one-on-one session; I give brand-new grades when students revise their themes (with a 2-week deadline for the first revision). Otherwise, I just talk and they just write--and write--and write.

Jim Moore
Mt. San Antonio College

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After discussing a short story with my compositon class, I explained the "key-hole" writing approach--thesis sentence at end of opening paragraph, thesis development in body of paper, thesis reinstatement in final paragraph--and had them write an essay on some aspect of the reading selection.

Then, rather than have them hand in their essays for grading, I had each student bring his paper to my office so we could go over it together. This enabled me to explain structure, style, and a variety of other factors necessary to salvage the paper. Each student was especially interested because we were dealing with his/her subject matter.

Because of the excellent response and feedback, I've been using this method all semester. (I do a number of other things, such as a step-by-step approach to

essay writing, but I don't want to disclose all of my secrets!)

Ferrel G. Roundy
Taft College

- -

"A description of a successful writing task in freshman composition - What you did, how you did it, and why."

This is a kind of chain letter, isn't it? Stop it and you will have foul luck.

Success is a word that needs to be defined. In fact, treating your question (comment, request) as though you were a class in front of me, I'd ask for definitions, and then for illustrations of said definitions, then cross-pollinations, arguments about definitions. I would have the class divide up into groups of four (or three) and read their summaries to each other. This would consume an hour, and home assignment would be to accrete to these summaries other stories, other times, to be brought back to be read before the class.

Inherent in differences of definitions is the process of comparison/contrast, the need for binaural, binocular, even bi-olfactory sensing, the need in nature for perspective in all things.

The above leads to comparing sources/authorities and making bibliographies and footnotes.

All things lead to all things. With a purpose in English composition, it is possible to take just any old input at all and turn it to your purpose.

Of course, it is necessary to be flexible, open and see the fun in most things to do this. You can't wear a starched shirt or tie or a lot of underwear. You have to be able to stand for lateral as well as vertical input and noise in the classroom. It helps to have attained maturity and tenure.

Samuel A. Eisenstein
Los Angeles City College

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Since I try to get my students to start an essay by first whomping up a brief plan that starts with a full-sentence statement of the central idea they are going to try to get across to a reader, I have a little exercise designed to prove that writing such a central idea is easy. I first introduce the idea that most in-class writing assignments in any course are given in imperative sentences ("Discuss such and such.") Then I point out that usually the imperative sentence will contain a key word, often a plural noun, that they must focus on and include in the statement of their central idea, which will simply be a declarative sentence that turns the imperative sentence around.

After such an orientation, with some examples, such as "Discuss the major causes for the War of 1812," I give them the enclosed handout, which has been deliberately written in meaningless nonsense, my purpose being to get them to focus on the key words, such as causes in the example above, and then to write a declarative sentence using that key word and most of the other words in the assignment.

The assignment seems to work fairly well most of the time, mainly, I think, because the kids are a bit amused by the nonsense and perhaps because the whole thing is obviously non-threatening. Later, of course, I follow up with some sensible stuff done in the same format, and by then most of the students seen to catch on to the utility of this ancient writing crutch and to transfer it to their own writing tasks.

Handout - Central Ideas From Imperative Instructions

Write an appropriate central idea for each of the following:

1. Discuss some of the uses for the frembullar.
2. Discuss some of the steps that could be taken to reduce the zologite content of the larfton.
3. Discuss some of the main problems that Dr. Thromble may encounter in his negotiations with Utopavia.
4. Discuss some of the benefits of proper paper-clip maintenance.
5. Discuss the various types of rupsniders.
6. Discusss some of the causes of chronic achtosis of the malopian tract.
7. Discuss some of the probable effects on the housing industry if spindelderfers remain in short supply.
8. Discuss the basic techniques of refurbishing a thwatovert.
9. Discuss some of the economid disadvantages resulting from over-dependence on flexnark production.
10. Discuss some of the changes in American society since the introduction of the whapdoodle.

Planning the Short Essay

Complete the outlines that follow the imperative instructions.

ONE. Discuss some of your reasons for being in college.

Central idea:
I.
II.
III.

TWO. Discuss some of the methods you use in studying vocabulary.

Central idea:
I.
II.
III.

THREE. Discuss some of the steps that could be taken to reduce traffic accidents.
Central idea:
I.
II.
III.

FOUR. Discuss some of the problems faced by the beginning college student.
Central idea:
I.
II.
III.

FIVE. Discuss some of the TV shows that you have found worthwhile.
Central idea:
I.
II.
III.

John I. Hartley
El Camino College

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This past summer I attended a Great Teachers Seminar, and each of us was asked to bring a successful teaching plan (if possible) to share with the participants.

The following was my response, and I think it provides the kind of information you have requested.

I have since added peer group evaluations after each writing, before I see the students individually. This has added even more positive results:

1. Students get a better measure of their own ability in relation to their peers and a better understanding of the grading system I use.
2. Students learn to be better critics of their own writing through their peer evaluation experience.
3. It saves my conference time because the students are already aware of many of their papers' weaknesses.
4. It also saves me much energy and fatigue since I do not have to say the same things so many times.

An Approach to Teaching Freshman English Composition

I. RATIONALE
   A. After many years of trying different approaches, I have evolved the following format (more eclectic than innovative, I'd say) to be the most successful method of teaching English composition to students who, for the most part, view the course with dread, hostility, or resignation.
   B. My philosophical approach is to provide as much individualized instruction as possible without losing overall control and direction of the class as a whole.

II. FORMAT
   A. At the end of each two week period of discussion and analysis of the writing assignment, each student writes an essay in class from an outline prepared at home.
   B. I then divided the class into three groups, each meeting during one class session of the third week.
      1. Each student keeps a log of his work during the two non-class

hours which must show that he is using this time to work on class assignments, i.e., the term paper or required readings.

2. During the conference sessions I am able to discuss each student's paper individually.
   a. Additional time is arranged at an office hour for students who need more help.
3. By the third conference segment I am also able to give some individual time to the progress of the term paper, i.e., checking outlines, organization, rough drafts, etc.
   a. The students seem to feel much more confident about their papers with this kind of personal assistance.

III. EVALUATION

A. Overall, the student response to this semi-open approach has been more productive than any other method I have tried.
   1. I have had more enthusiastic feedback from students.
   2. I have had fewer drop-outs.
   3. I have had better over-all improvement in the students' written work.

B. A psychological "plus" for the weary composition instructor is that he or she need spend much less time marking papers, since the writing problems can be discussed more effectively on a one-to-one basis than pages filled with corrections.

Linda Nibley
Glendale College

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I use my own text, Fundamentals of Modern English (Kendall/Hunt, Dubuque.) After working on sentence patterns to give the students an insight into machinery of English sentences, I assign Chap. 9 "Joining the Patterns." And I tell them to know the connectors: 7 conjunctions, 8 subordinators, and any 6 sentence connectors. Punctuation revolves around these connectors. First session at beginning of class I give them a quiz on the specific connectors--they must know them and keep them separate.

Then I write the following formulas on the board: SP, c SP
S SP, SP
SP; SC SP

I explain and comment on each formula--explaining the punctuation of most publishing houses today.

Then I have students write sentences according to each formula. Then we go over some of the exercises in book, taken from their own theme papers.

The following session: another quiz on connectors and formulas, writing of more sentences and more exercises.

Finally, stress that application of knowledge learned be projected into their weekly themes, hoping that most of their punctuation errors have been eliminated! (Of course I discuss intonation - stress, pitch and juncture-

before tackling punctuation.)

Lynwood Carranco
College of the Redwoods

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I wish I could provide you with something startling; however, I have found that the special chemistry of success is more frequently a matter of propinguity rather than the result of special preparation. Nevertheless, I have found that approaching a single aspect of composition (e.g. unity) separately and engaging the student in rewrite work until the principle is understood works well, especially if one removes the threat of letter grade and judges the student's effort as satisfactory or rewrite. Such a technique focuses the student's efforts and allays the sense of failure and fragmentation when all aspects of rhetoric are criticized simultaneously. Naturally, mastery of techniques should be cumulative (i.e. 1. thesis clarity, 2. thesis clarity-unity, 3. thesis clarity-unity-coherence, 3. thesis clarity-unity-coherence-pattern of development, etc. Nothing more than the tried and true - precisely what Garrison is up to.

David Sundstrand
Citrus College

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Making better writers of remedial level English students seems like a hopeless, thankless task at times. However, during a period of more than twenty-five years of community college English teaching, I have evolved a system which works well for my students. First, may I point out that I use my own materials primarily, materials developed from actual classroom experience.

I wrote my own textbook, Writing Better Prose, which is divided into three sections. These sections are: writing better sentences, writing better paragraphs, and writing better themes. After my students have spent about eight weeks reviewing the so-called "Nine Major Errors," we are ready for the "great leap forward," writing paragraphs. Because so many remedial writing students think that in writing "luck's a chance, but trouble's sure," I try to assure them that writing is not a chaotic, formless mass, but an area where skills can be developed by adherence to certain basic principles.

After suggesting the need for an importance of the topic sentence as the "backbone" of a paragraph, I point out "muscles" may be added to the "skeleton" by recognizing and using four basic laws for paragraph development. These laws are, of course, the familiar ones of unity, coherence, emphasis, and completeness.

A writing improvement technique which gives students something to latch onto immediately is to have them rewrite four exercises from the textbook; each exercise stresses one of the four laws mentioned. (See enclosed examples).

These four exercises are assigned as a do-at-home project. When they are completed, the students exchange each exercise separately in class, then they are encouraged to comment upon how well (or how poorly) the work was done. Every effort is made to make this a group therapy session devoted to getting students concerned with and involved in paragraph development. Usually this "therapy" discussion extends through at least two class periods of one hour each.

The next writing assignment is - you guessed it - having students develop a paragraph of approximately 150 words upon one of six topic sentences which I assign. This paragraph, which is an outside written assignment, is picked up and graded by me. In evaluating this particular paragraph, I inform the students in advance that I will be looking for their ability to incorporate the laws of unity, coherence, emphasis, and completeness into this one paragraph.

Paragraph Unity

Unity within a paragraph is concerned with the development of one major idea and the omission of material not related to the major idea. Rewrite the following paragraph to improve its unity.

Example: My favorite sport is wrestling. During my four years of participation in this sport, I have had two outstanding instructors. One was my high school coach; the other instructor is my present coach. Both of these instructors have contributed greatly to my knowledge of and skill in wrestling. Wrestling is my favorite sport because it teaches good sportsmanship, it stresses the importance of keeping in tip-top condition, and it matches one indivudally with an opponent of equal size. I enjoy wrestling not only because of the physical contact it involves, but because it is a sport which places a premium upon quick thinking and quick acting. College wrestling is conducted under Olympic-type wrestling rules and is altogether different from the "wrestling" ones sees on television.

Paragraph Coherence

Coherence within a paragraph is obtained by developing the material in an orderly fashion. Coherence is often improved through the aid of appropriate transitional words and phrases. Rewrite the following paragraph to give the material within it greater coherence.

Example: My hobby is sky diving, which is also known as parachuting. I enjoy my hobby because it is loaded with adventure. When you jump from an airplane you seem to float through space. As you leave the plane you have a few seconds of "free fall." You pull the rip cord, your parachute opens, and you float to the ground. Sky diving originated in France. It is not a major sport in the United States. It is a major sport in France. Sky diving became an Olympic sport in 1956. Today sky diving clubs are being organized throughout the United States. Competition between clubs is directed toward testing the skill of divers as they steer themselves toward the center of a cross marked in a drop zone. Parachuting is an expensive hobby. This is the main drawback. By joining a sky diving club you can reduce expenses considerably.

Paragraph Emphasis

Emphasis within a paragraph may be shown by arranging ideas in a manner which show their relative importance. A simple check for emphasis is to note how much space each idea receives. Rewrite the following paragraph so that the main idea expressed receives correct emphasis.

Example: I think a good parent is one who possesses love and understanding, who is kind, and who treats each child in the family as an individual. Of these factors in being a good parent, the most important is to possess love and understanding. Kindness may be illustrated in several ways. When I was young and had a problem, my parents were always present to lend a helping hand in the solution of my problem. My parents seldom used force, for they felt that kindness worked miracles with children, while force made a child unruly. I remember their saying that a lion tamer needed a whip to keep his charges in line, but that the lion tamer would pay for his harshness the day he lost or forgot his whip. Fear, then, according to my parents, should never be used in dealing with the impressionistic minds of children. Each of us was always treated as an individual, too, a fact which greatly endeared my parents to me.

Paragraph Completeness

Most paragraphs which are incompletely developed result from inadequate treatment of the topic sentence. Rewrite the following material into a paragraph of approximately 150 words, making a particular effort to elaborate upon the topic sentence.

Example: The person that I marry must be understanding, intelligent, and energetic. He must be able to provide me with the usual necessities, and a few luxuries, I hope. He must believe that divorce is a horrible way to end a marriage. The man that I marry must love me.

Charles M. Rodecker
San Bernardino Valley College

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For any writing assignment--a descriptive paragraph, a brief argumentative essay or just about anything else--I often do the assignment right along with the class and then read mine when they read theirs. Often, my writing is no stronger or smarter than anyone else's. And that's the point. Students like to feel, I believe, that their teachers aren't academic clones. It encourages young writers to see their teachers try and fumble around and marginally succeed. This process helps to break down the tension between me and my students if they feel that they are always wrong, and I am always right.

Not everyone will like this teaching device. People who think in terms of Right/Wrong and King/Serfs should leave it alone.

Ronald Koertge
Pasadena City College

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I've found that no one task in itself works or does not work; each new assignment grows out of previous assignments. An entire semester's sequence focusses on making the student aware of the choices he has as a writer must make (tone, point of view, subject matter, method of development, audience, etc.), so that the piece of writing he produces is appropriate for his purpose. With individual assignments, students need to understnad clearly what expectations they are striving to fulfill--the particular topic becomes, thus, relatively unimportant.

John B. Friesen
Canada College

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A simple method I use with all freshman composition papers I "correct" is to place the burden of correction on the student--an inductive method of learning the mechanics of writing, actually. In the earlier papers in a semester, I cross through all errors with a highlighting marker. Errors longer than a few words are bracketed with the highlighter, errors including matters such as logic, paragraphic, etc. The student then makes all corrections, either from the memory of past writing experiences or by finding the error in a handbook--without benefit of any suggestions from me. (This is a very difficult process for many students to accept--they plague me with questions, which I firmly refuse to answer.) Once the corrections have been made and the paper returned, I check all corrections, noting how the corrections should have been made if an error remains. Grading is based on what the student has to say, how he/she says it, how free of errors the first draft is and how well the student seems to be learning through the correcting process. In later papers, I place check marks at the end of each line that contains an error(s). This makes the learning process even more certain, for the student must determine the place in the line where the error occurs and the nature of the error. I have found this method provides a much better learning experience than correcting the paper for the student, in the uncertain hope that the student just might bother to look the paper over and learn from the instructor's marks.

Eugene K. Hanson
College of the Desert

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THE WHOLE THING (Prentice-Hall, Inc.) is a text and a composition course. It is used in both remedial and college-level composition classes. It is a set of directions, with explanations and examples, for planning, for writing, and for revising. Each of the first three writing assignments is carefully structured to teach one or more specific principles of effective writing while minimizing or eliminating the need to cope with other principles. Some of the Preliminary Planning procedures are new. One of the best--the technique for achieving order--is unusual for the composition classroom, though it is used by professional writers everywhere. It has stunning results. All students achieve order in every paragraph, main division, and essay; some achieve organizational patterns of remarkable sophistication. Revision techniques

are new, too. A student identifies an off-focus or poorly focused sentence in h/h own paragraph. As the student uses the Focus procedure to bring the right word into subject position in that sentence, certain grammatical errors simply disappear. Hard to believe? Yes. But it's simple, and it works. Throughout the course each student learns actual techniques for planning/ writing/ analyzing-revising. Each student works entirely on h/h own writing. Students are always at work on a paper, planning it or writing it or revising it, learning how to do it as they do it.

As a result, instructors using THE WHOLE THING grade no papers during most of the course. That's right. During the last weeks of the course, they grade two essays for each student. And THE WHOLE THING requires no elaborate record-keeping. The instructor sees each student's work day by day and can readily review it at the end of the course. The instructor keeps a calendar notebook in which students jot their progress at the end of each class and the instructor notes absences. That's the extent of the record-keeping. The instructor works during regular class hours in the classroom with each student. (I have 20+ students in each class and teach five classes using THE WHOLE THING each semester.) The structure provided by the text frees the instructor to do really interesting work with each student and frees the student to develop as far and as fast as s/he is able to.

And later? A history major who feels he knows more than he has been able to communicate in history essay-examinations works one history essay-question as his last paper in my class. Later, in my final exam, he plans, writes, and revises part of a history paper due to his history final. He finishes his history paper on his own, writes his history final, and later phones me to say he credits his composition course with raising his grade in history. He goes on to complete an M.A. in history. Another student brings me the sociology paper she wrote using the procedures of THE WHOLE THING. The instructor's note praises her specificity and her writing. These students are not exceptions.

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Hartnell College

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It's not so much what's assigned as how it's assigned. An assignment becomes successful if I share my expectations with my students. For instance, I might require a first person narrative. They know, before they sit down to write, all about first person and about narrative structure. They write to fulfill clear expectations. Writing is a series of choices based on audience, purpose, subject matter, kind, and point of view. My task is to make my students familiar with many choices so they can put together a workable essay. So no one assignment is any more magical than any other.

Pamela Stein
Canada College

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I received your request for a writing task that has really worked for me, but I am unable to respond because I do not have a number of single lessons from which to choose. Instead I offer a series of sequential lessons on writing, each one of which contributes to helping students develop the facility and skill to write a paragraph or an essay. I have found my system to be very effective because students build a framework to which they add more information and develop syntactic fluency as they work with increasingly complex sentence structure and more sophisticated subjects.

Students who agonize over each writing assignment because they have not learned to express their ideas effectively in writing needed a guided approach to learning to write. Single lessons, though they might be quite effective in some respects, tend to offer a fragmented view of writing. I feel strongly that a teacher who does not give guidance and support is as irresponsible as a physician who would send a patient to a pharmacy to choose whatever medicine he or she wishes from the shelves; the problem is that some medicines might not help at all, and others might kill the patient.

Although some teachers I talk with believe this guided approach is too highly structured and inhibits creativity, I have found that it actually is liberating because it helps students develop a sense of judgement about their writing. As they learn the difference between general and specific ideas, they begin to think logically because they begin to see the relationship of ideas to one another. When they begin to understand the patterns of language and the relationship of ideas in sentences, paragraphs, and essays, writing no longer seems to be a mystery, and they notice that they can more easily understand what they read. As a result, they read more and then increase the number of topics they want to write about. While writing and rewriting, they recognize that they are developing a fluency with language and gaining control as they become well acquainted with organizational patterns that work. Even a large number of students who feel extremely inadequate at first gradually gain self-confidence as they experience a continuing series of little successes.

The texts I have written for this program include the following: Commanding Sentences, second Edition, 1979; Commanding Paragraph, 1977; Commanding Essays, 1978; Commanding Composition, 1980. They are all published by Scott, Foresman and Company, 1900 East Lake Avenue, Glenview, Illinois.

Helen Mills
American River College
Sacramento, CA 95841

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College of the Desert
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College of the Redwoods
College of San Mateo
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Olympia Technical Community College
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Walnut Ridge, Arizona

Western Iowa Technical
Community College
Sioux City, Iowa

Wharton County Junior College
Wharton, Texas

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